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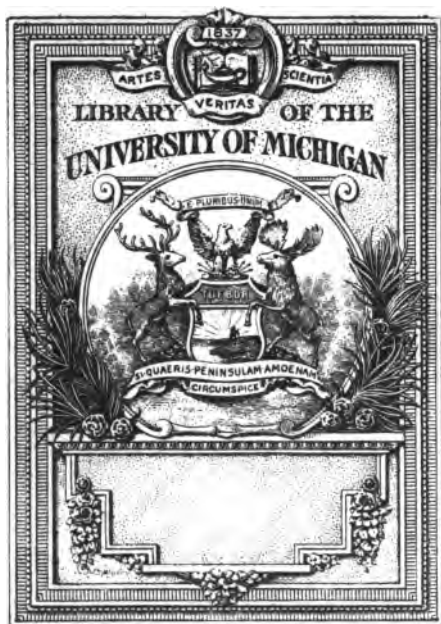
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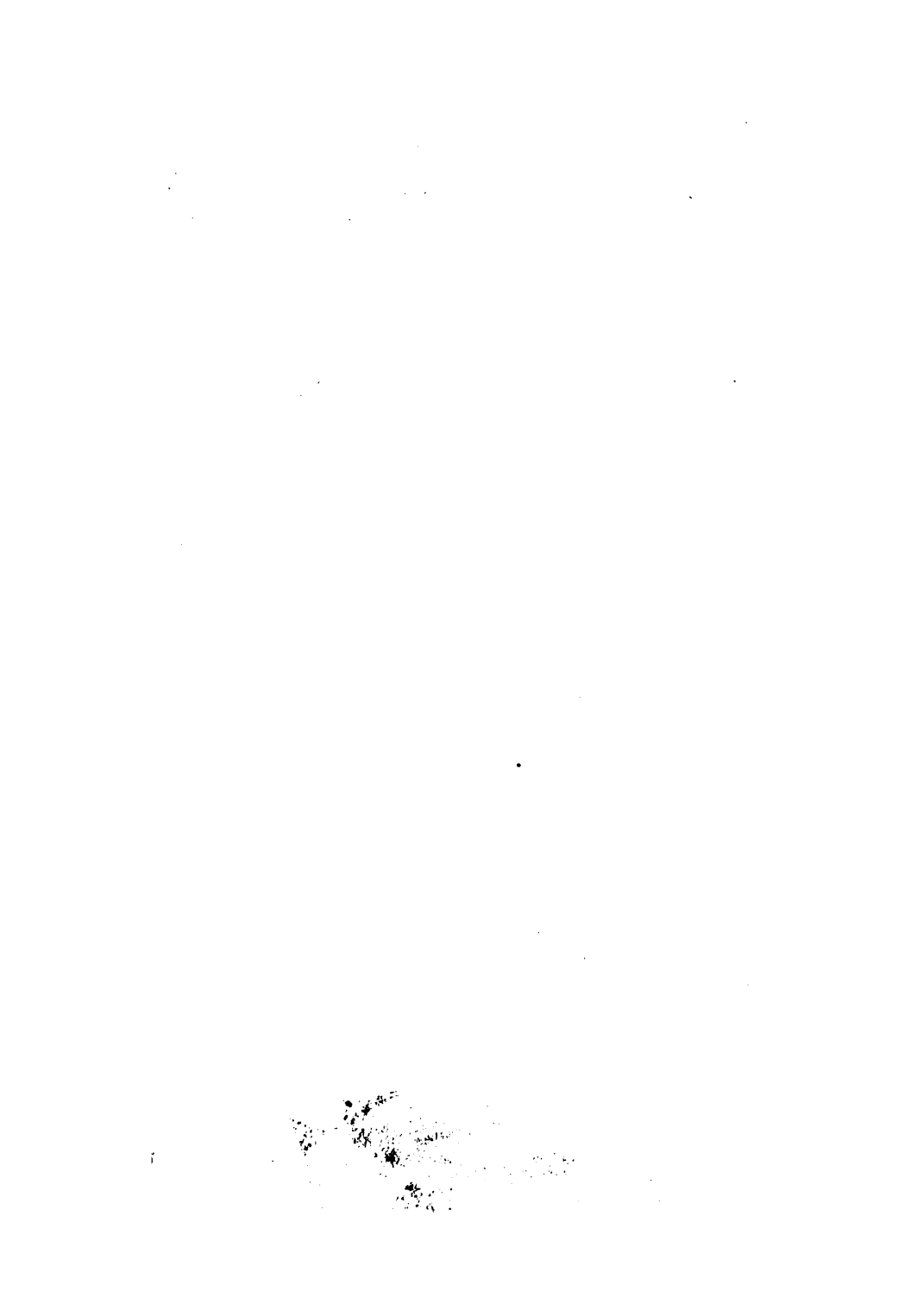




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A SEA TURN AND OTHER MATTERS

BY

THOMAS BAILEY ALDRICH



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A SEA TURN

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A SEA TURN

I

ANY one catching a casual glimpse of the Brandons in their summer cottage on Marblehead Neck would have inferred that the young couple were basking in the light of their honeymoon, though in point of fact that ineffable satellite had waxed and waned — if it ever had really waned — five years before. In front of the cottage was a small garden with a profusion of clove-pinks, hollyhocks, and cinnamon-roses, through which tangle of color and perfume a shell-paved walk ran from the piazza steps to a gate

opening on the rustic street. Every morning, at precisely the same hour, Mrs. Brandon, in a pretty breakfast gown of some bright-tinted material, might have been seen standing by the gate and waving good-by to Mr. Brandon on his way to the station. By means of a wireless telegraph, a supplementary kiss was exchanged between them just as he was vanishing round the corner. Then Mrs. Brandon fluttered up the garden walk, like one of the bayadere butterflies that haunted the place, and so into the house.

Mr. Brandon went to Boston each day by the 8.15 train, and returned on the noon express. Twice in the month, however, he was detained in the city until late in the afternoon. On these occasions the parting at

the garden gate was especially lover-like, and the wireless telegraph was worked to its fullest capacity. The separation was too brief to entail any serious gloom, and their partings, if sometimes a little italicized, were nearly always as cheerful as their meetings.

But one July morning a cloud, the merest shadow of a cloud, seemed to rest upon their farewell for the day. There was an almost imperceptible dimness in the blue of Mrs. Brandon's eyes, and though a smile illuminated her features, it was a little on one side of the mouth, and had something perfunctory about it. The deflection of a thousandth part of an inch in the curve of the upper lip would have turned the smile into a pout. Mr. Brandon, as he lingered a moment at

the gate, displayed the physiognomy of one not completely satisfied with himself. He had not gone more than three yards from the paling when he hesitated, and retraced his steps.

"The truth is, Helen," he said, "I don't like the Barter tribe."

"Tribe? What an expression! One would imagine they wore war-paint, and went about flourishing tomahawks and scalping-knives. Fortunately, we have sat in their wigwam and smoked the pipe of peace with them."

"Yes, we've eaten of their venison. I don't think it agreed with me."

"Why don't you like the Barters, Ned?"

"I don't know, and that makes me dislike them all the more. It's a clear case of 'Dr. Fell.' They take their wealth so placidly; I suppose that's

it. They seem to me to have the unassuming arrogance of ample income."

"I wish we had it, dear — the income. I don't see anything arrogant in them. They strike me as straightforward, kindly people, and quite unspoiled by money. The Barters have been very polite to us. They are rich, and they live richly, and so would you and I, if we were in their place, and make a good deal more dash, too. There's no iniquity in keeping an expensive yacht, when one can afford it."

"And there's no harm in a neighbor taking an afternoon cruise in it, if she's invited. I'm sorry that I raised the slightest objection. I really don't care."

"But you said you did, and you do."

•

You said the Barters were not the kind of persons you would prefer to see me intimate with, and they can't have reformed and become quite desirable acquaintances in the space of five minutes."

"Don't be a wilful goose, Helen. It is I who have reformed. I can do it any time in two minutes. I've done it repeatedly. The Barters are all right. Go and have your sail, dear."

"No, Ned; you give in to me because you are so good; but I know that down deep in your heart you disapprove of them — not of them really, but Mrs. Barter's brother. You can't forgive him for seeming to think me very nice at the regatta two weeks ago, and I'm sure I was. He didn't do a thing but overfeed me with maca-

rooms. Well, I give up the sail quite willingly. Your objection has taken the possible pleasure out of it."

"But I don't object."

"Oh, Ned! you will miss your train! You have n't a second to lose. There! — quick now."

As Mr. Brandon hurried away, he said, looking back over his shoulder: "I don't care two coppers about that hand-made dude — what 's-his-name? — Mitchell."

With the light chestnut hair blown about her face, and such indigo blue in her eyes as Neptune's daughter might have had, the young woman made a winsome picture, lingering there by the fence under the elm boughs.



II

THE composite smile still rested on Mrs. Brandon's lips as she reëntered the cottage and passed into the sitting-room. On a desk between two windows lay the note which had furnished the text for their breakfast-table talk that morning. Stamped at the top of the sheet was a tiny reproduction in colors of Commodore Barter's private yacht-signal. The note paper was obviously his, though it gave forth a faint breath of vervain and bore the penmanship of Mrs. Barter. Mrs. Brandon, with a half-unconscious sigh, picked up the epistle and read it again.

"It is just a family party," wrote

A SEA TURN

Mrs. Barter; "there will be nobody but the Commodore, the two children, my brother, and myself. I learn that Mr. Brandon is to pass the day in town, or the invitation would eagerly include him. His absence, however, makes me feel more confident of securing you. Do come! The launch will be at the wharf at ten o'clock. I will meet you there or call for you, whichever you like. We promise to have you safely on shore in time to welcome Mr. Brandon by the 6.30 train — if that's his train. You see I know your exemplary habits!"

Mrs. Brandon, with a complete sigh this time, replaced the note on the desk, and glanced wistfully out of the bay-window which overlooked the sea. It was a heavenly blue and gold day, following a week of rain. The breeze

swayed the elm boughs in the old-fashioned garden and made white caps on the stretch of azure water glimpsed beyond. In the distance the sails of diminutive fishing-boats flashed in the sun like silver fins. At her moorings, half a mile from shore, lay the Barter yacht, rising and falling with the gentle swell as gracefully as a pond-lily. The busy black specks on the deck were sailors swinging out the boat-boom. Presently the quartermaster's whistle sent a faint bird-like trill through the air, and they could be seen lowering the naphtha launch from the davits. Then a sailor ran out on the slender boom, probably with the boat-cushions under one arm.

Mrs. Brandon turned away her eyes; she could not bear to look any more, such a sea-longing stirred in her

bosom. Her gaze wandered idly round the room and again rested by chance on Mrs. Barter's invitation lying on the desk. At that instant a mysterious flurry of wind lifted the half-folded sheet and dropped it at Helen Brandon's feet. She stooped and picked up the note. Her fingers no sooner touched the paper than she felt that the thing was hypnotizing her.

"I've half a mind to go," she dreamily murmured to herself. "It was unreasonable for Edward to object in the first place. I shall be alone all day, and I think it very unkind of him to wish to deny me so innocent a pleasure, simply because he does n't happen to fancy Mrs. Barter's brother. It's going to be dreadfully hot here, as well as in the city. Edward was obliged to go to town; that could n't

be helped ; but there's no reason why I should suffer also. My being uncomfortable is n't likely to make it any cooler for him. Besides, I can get back by five or six o'clock, and he need n't know anything about it, though of course I shall tell him before he's been home five minutes — I'm just that foolish where Ned is concerned — and then he may scold as much as he wants to ; I shall have had a delightful sail along the coast, and escaped the heat. Dear Ned ! he's as full of prejudices as he can hold ; but I would n't have him changed in any particular. It would n't be the same Ned if he did n't have his little faults " — and Mrs. Brandon blew a condoning message to him through the air from the tips of her fingers.

Thus the innocent-looking missive,

held lightly in her hand, had succeeded in working its occult spell. Helen seated herself at the desk, wrote a few lines accepting with pleasure Mrs. Barter's "sweetest invitation," and dispatched them to their address by Mr. Peevey, the gardener.

On leaving the house an hour or so later, Mrs. Brandon did not confide her intended movements to Liza, the maid, but merely remarked:

"I am to lunch out, Liza, and shall probably not return before five or six o'clock — if any one calls."

III

WHEN Edward Brandon reached his office that morning, he was not slightly vexed to learn that the afternoon business conference had been postponed — not that he was desirous of spending the entire day in the broiling city, but he had given up one or two pleasant schemes in order to do so. He was at liberty to return to Marblehead by the noon express, and he took his way to the North Station in no amiable mood. He had the peculiarity of not liking to have his plans disarranged, even when they were disagreeable. Once having resigned himself to the unpleasant, it was a waste of philo-

sophic vitality not to face it. The purchasing of a bunch of violets at a florist's on Tremont Street was instrumental in partly restoring his good humor.

"It's rather absurd of me," he reflected, "to grumble because I've got an unexpected half holiday. I must have turned out wrong side up this morning. I did n't mean not to be nice to Nelly about the Barters. They're well enough, I dare say, but old Barter — I don't know why I call him old Barter, for he is not more than seven years my senior — somehow always gets on my nerves with his blue yachting cap and red nose and salty manner generally. However, I can stand the Commodore, but that brother of Mrs. Barter, with his talk about 'the Venus de Medici' and

'the Uffizi Gallery at Florence' (as if it could be anywhere else!) is a horror. . . . Nelly will be surprised to see me back so soon. After lunch we'll drive over to Gloucester and call on the Bellamys. They are certain to keep us to dinner, and the ride home in the moonlight will be charming."

Brandon had hardly seated himself on the shady side of the crowded Pullman when three young men entered the car — three excellent specimens of elegant Young Boston. Their athletic figures and bronzed faces told of polo and golf and sea weather. One of the three had the remains of a rich tan lately caught in the trenches before Santiago. The trio were clad in blue flannel suits, and might have been taken for naval officers in mufti. They were respec-

tively known to their prosperous world, and perhaps beyond, as Morton Bangs, John Beverly, and Peabody Preston.

"There's Brandon now!" cried Mr. Bangs, the knight of the copper countenance. "We have just looked in at your office to ask you to take a spin with us. The yacht's at Marblehead."

"What's the Spitfire doing at Marblehead?" asked Brandon, giving a hand to each of the three graces in turn.

"We scuttled in there out of the wet the other night, and I ran up to town by rail. Preston and I are to lunch with Beverly at the club, and then we are going to try our new jibs and topsails. We got blown to ribbons Friday night off Cape Ann. Won't you come along?"

" I wish I could, Bangs, but I am to drive Mrs. Brandon over to Gloucester, where we have a sort of engagement to dine with the Bellamys."

" Devilish sorry — with kindest regards to Mrs. Brandon all the same. Could n't we run into Gloucester — there 'll be a moon, you know — and bring the pair of you back to Marblehead ? "

" Carriage and all ? "

" Confound the carriage ! — leave it," suggested Preston.

" I could n't do that."

Brandon was both glad and sorry to have so good an excuse for declining the invitation. The Spitfire was the fastest yacht of her class in the Eastern Squadron, and it was always a pleasure to be on her ; but the Spitfire — were one to give heed

to envious talk — was no faster than her owner. Now, if Commodore Barter was Mr. Brandon's *bête noire*, Morton Bangs was Mrs. Brandon's, and in view of the conversation with Helen that morning, it struck Edward as diplomatic, on the present occasion, at least, to respect her deplorable prejudice. Moreover, he preferred to spend the day with his wife.

"If this wind holds," said Morton Bangs as the train slowed up and stopped in the Marblehead station, "we shall have a blooming spin. I'm awfully sorry, my boy, you can't come. Should Madam have a headache, or anything change your plans, you'll find the gig at the landing at two o'clock sharp. If you're a bit late, give us a whistle. We shan't get off immediately. Don't intend

to be out over five or six hours. God go with you, Señor, as they say down in Cuba, and usually mean quite a different accompaniment."

Edward Brandon could not justify to himself his sense of personal grievance on not finding Helen at the cottage. Why should she have remained at home? It was only natural that she should not care to eat her lunch alone and mope the rest of the day in solitude. She had left no word for him — of course she had n't — not expecting him back until after seven. Yet in spite of his reasoning he vaguely resented Helen's absence.

"Did n't say where she was going, Liza?"

"No, sir, she only said she should n't be in for the afternoon."

There were a dozen places along the North Shore to which Helen might have been invited unceremoniously. She had had no engagement when he quitted her. Somebody had dropped in by chance, and seeing his wife alone, had asked her to lunch. It was plainly an impromptu affair.

"Did they come in a carriage, Liza?"

"Who, sir?"

"The persons who took Mrs. Brandon away."

"Nobody took her, sir. She did n't go in a carriage. She walked."

Then Helen must have gone to some place in the immediate neighborhood. Edward wondered where; but he had no intention of looking her up, with so many chances against

finding her. The day was a failure from beginning to end, and there was nothing to do but to take the matter philosophically. A book and a cigar, and perhaps a stroll by the water-side, would help kill time until she came home. A glimmering consciousness of how dependent he was on Helen came over him.

"Tell Suzan to cook a chop for me, Liza, or send up a slice of cold ham, or something — I don't care what. If there's a bottle of Bass on the ice, serve that."

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Brandon was on the point of sitting down to his silent meal when the Spitfire swept into his mind and dropped anchor, so to speak.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed, pushing away the empty plate in front of

him, "I was n't due before 7.30, anyhow. There's no use in my mooning about the house all the afternoon. The boys can't have finished tiffin yet — maybe they have n't begun. I'll join them. Nothing but a dash of blue water will cure me of my dumps. If I don't get back at precisely 7.30 — why, the train was n't on time. It is n't necessary to bother Nelly about it. I am sorry she does n't like Morton Bangs. What a breeze for the Spitfire!"

It is to be noticed that the husband's conscience was an easier working piece of mechanism than the wife's. Hastily snatching up a light overcoat from the hat-rack in the hall, Mr. Brandon started for the front door.

"By the way, Liza, I was n't ex-

pected back until evening, and you need n't say anything about me when Mrs. Brandon returns. It would only make her sorry that she went out."

"I wonder what's up, I do," was the comment of Liza, the maid, standing by the parlor window. "He has n't touched a mouthful of food. The cook 'll be mad, that's one comfort. I wonder why cooks are always so very crusty. I suppose they get overdone. The mistress being away seems to have upset Mr. B. She went off queerly, I must say. There's something gone wrong, more's the pity, and the two just like a pair of cooing doves on a roof ever since I've been in the place."

IV

VEUVE CLICQUOT in the middle of the day is perhaps not quite good form, but it is wholly palatable, and deviled crab, like Mr. Emerson's rhodora, is always its own excuse for being. Helen Brandon pronounced the lunch delicious, exquisitely prepared and served; and indeed, Commodore Barter's chef was worth his weight in truffles. The invigorating salt air had given everybody an appetite. The two little Barter's had to have sandwiches applied to them before the Pelican was well out of the harbor.

As Mrs. Brandon sat in a bamboo chair near the companion-hatch, with

the mainsail looming above her like a vast snowy cloud, it was to be seen that her face had lost the touch of pensiveness which had marked it when she came aboard. Mrs. Barter had been very sweet and matronly with her, and the Commodore, in his bluff, hearty fashion, had been charming. He was a short gentleman, inclined to stoutness, with grayish hair and florid complexion, and a more prominent nose than perhaps he himself would have chosen had he been consulted in the matter; but not at all an ill-looking person. It was too bad of Edward to liken him to the carving on Baron Puck's umbrella handle in "La Grande Duchesse." But that was Edward's wicked way. And Mr. Mitchell, Mrs. Barter's brother, he was not in the least a dude. He had

spent much time abroad, and if something in America was always reminding him—or not reminding him—of something on the Continent, where was the harm? One must expect to be bored a little by persons who have travelled.

For Mrs. Brandon Mr. Mitchell's absence would really have been a partial eclipse of the promised gayety. It was so amusing to watch how fate led him, fatuitous and unconscious, into the trap of foreign reminiscence. Mrs. Brandon waited in tingling expectancy for the inevitable appearance of "the Venus de Medici;" and it was only after a stroll through "the Uffizi Gallery at Florence" that she settled herself down to the tranquil enjoyment of the occasion.

The town of Marblehead, with its

weather-stained roofs and spires, had long since crumbled on the horizon, and now lay sunken in the sea like some fabulous city of old. Presently there was nothing to be seen but sky and ocean, with here and there a spectral sail, or a coastwise steamer leaving a trail of black smoke against the blue. With what grace the Pelican dipped and rose, shaking the white crystals from her beak! Mrs. Brandon had come of a breed of sailors, and there was true sea in her blood. The sense of space and the contagious exhilaration in the air added a color to her cheeks as she sat there, looking supremely content, save at intervals, when her thought reverted to dear Edward sweltering in his stuffy office on Court Street — bending fagged at his desk in a mephitic odor of

calf-skin and Russia leather, instead of facing these heavenly breezes and drinking in all this invisible liquid silver. Poor dear Edward!

Mr. Mitchell, who had been assiduous in fetching wraps and footstools for the two ladies, was standing at Mrs. Brandon's side with a glass at his eye intently inspecting some object in the distance. After a minute or two he lowered the glass, and said:

"That's the Spitfire — Morton Bangs's boat. She seems to be heading for Boston."

(At the same instant, as it happened, Morton Bangs turned to Edward Brandon and remarked:

"The Commodore's flag over yonder."

"Yes, I knew he was to take a run

this afternoon. He invited my wife, but she could n't go."

"Quaint old boy — Lemuel Barter."

"Very. Ought to have been born in the seventeenth century. *I* don't want him.")

"Is Mr. Bangs a friend of yours, Mr. Mitchell?" asked Mrs. Brandon, looking up.

"Oh, Bangs is everybody's friend; he's very popular. He and I were in Switzerland together two summers ago. We had quite a thrilling adventure in the Simplon Pass. Our *vetturino*, a Piedmontese named Martelli, got grossly intoxicated one day, and " — here Mr. Mitchell, detecting a lack of breathless interest in Mrs. Brandon's expression, adroitly brought his narrative to a close by saying, "and Bangs behaved in the

pluckiest manner. Don't you know him ? ”

“ My husband is acquainted with him. I know Mr. Bangs only slightly. He is rather fast, isn't he ? ”

“ Nautically or personally ? ”

“ Personally.”

“ Well, no, I don't think so,” replied Mr. Mitchell. “ He is not slow. He's an agreeable fellow, and a most delightful host on the water. His yachting parties are always lively.”

“ So I have heard,” said Mrs. Brandon.

The two yachts were now dipping their colors, and the conversation ended.

For the last hour or more the breeze had gradually lessened, and though the Pelican from time to time made one of those plunges which, aided by too

much fruit cake, had eliminated the two small Barters from general society, it was only a half-hearted plunge. The vessel was gliding on a comparatively level keel. The gentler motion was provocative of reverie, and Mrs. Brandon yielded herself up to it unresistingly. She did not care to talk, and when Mr. Mitchell retreated to a camp-stool on the other side of the deck, she scarcely noticed the movement. Mrs. Barter was below with the children, the Commodore had gone to the chart-room, and H  len was left alone to her sea-dreams. With partly closed eyes she leaned back on the cushions. After a while she was aroused by the Commodore's voice.

"That certainly looks like fog, Captain Jones, but I don't think it will amount to much. You can keep

on our course, and go about just before we come to Thatcher's Island. There 'll be time enough to get back."

Then Mrs. Brandon drifted off into a delicious drowse again, a semi-conscious trance in which she had the sensation of floating through interminable stretches of gray and silvery clouds. Faint, elusive shore-scents, as if blown from groves of lemon and magnolia, now and then touched her nostrils, and set her dreaming of the tropics. That penciled streak of vapor lying against the horizon, which she occasionally glimpsed through her drooping eyelashes, might have been Jamaica or a bit of the Haytian coastline. How long this lasted she could not tell, when something caused her to sit bolt upright in her chair. The boat was making so slight headway as

to seem almost stationary. The day had strangely darkened. A thick haze enveloped everything. The faint, melancholy throb of a bell came from across the water.

"The wind is leaving us entirely, sir," the Captain was saying.

"And the fog seems to be closing in. Can't we manage to make a harbor, Captain?"

"I'm afraid not, sir, with this wind. It's almost gone, sir."

"Then we shall have to lie here all night."

"You don't mean it!" cried Mrs. Brandon, springing to her feet.

"Unfortunately it looks that way," said the Commodore.

"But I can't stay aboard this yacht the entire night!" cried Mrs. Brandon, pressing one hand against her bosom

and white with agitation. "I — I — the inconvenience, the" —

"You need n't worry over that, my dear lady; Mrs. Barter and I can make you very comfortable."

Comfortable! — and Edward not knowing where she was and going crazy about her! Comfortable! Oh, why did she disregard his wishes, almost positively disobeying him! Would he ever forgive her? How could she explain it to him! And Mr. Mitchell! It was particularly awkward having him on board. He had been polite with his wraps and apollinaris and things, and had not once passed the limit of mere politeness, but if Mrs. Brandon could have had her will this moment, she would have fed that innocent gentleman over the side to the sharks. He was the only person who

had ever stirred the slightest grain of jealousy in Edward, and there were a dozen other men she had liked ten times as well. It appeared as if the hand of destiny out of pure malice had selected him as the instrument with which to punish her.

What would Edward think had become of her? She had covered up her tracks like a criminal, as she was. If it occurred to him to go to the Barter mansion for information, he would get none, for she had gone directly from the cottage to the boat-landing, and met nobody. It would soon be time for Edward to take his train. She pictured his arrival, his surprise, his increasing anxiety, and then his despair. She saw him, with men and lanterns in wherries, searching the water-front throughout the livelong

coming night. The adjacent woodlands would be ransacked; the whole neighborhood would be discussing her unaccountable disappearance.

Helen cast a terrified look around her. The fog was shutting down in every direction. The only objects visible were two phantomish lighthouses on Thatcher's Island in the distance, and they were rapidly dissolving. An unseen bell-buoy, somewhere, kept up its dismal iteration.

With a gasp of dismay Mrs. Brandon sank down in the bamboo chair, where she sat until it was too damp for her to remain longer on deck. At dinner she made heroic attempts to join in the conversation and mask her anguish, the uncomplimentary nature of which could not be revealed to the Barters. They must not sus-

pect that her husband had opposed her acceptance of their invitation and was wholly unaware that she had accepted it. How could she tell them that? The cook had surpassed himself on the menu; but the fabrics of his skill lay untasted on her plate. A thimbleful of sherry was all she could swallow.

As soon as the gentlemen took to their cigars, Mrs. Brandon pleaded a headache and retired to the small cabin assigned her. Kneeling on the locker, and with one cheek pressed against the open port, she tried to pierce the pallid darkness that surrounded them. The twin lights on Thatcher's Island, like a pair of eyes blurred with grief, were just distinguishable through the gloom. While she was watching them the faintly

luminous spots faded out, and the fog wrapped the becalmed vessel in a great black pall of velvet. Not a breath stirred the stagnant air, and the motionless water lay as smooth as oil.

“What shall I say to him to-morrow—if to-morrow ever comes?” was Mrs. Brandon’s agonized reflection. “He will not have gone to town, of course. Having perhaps spent the entire night walking up and down the room, he will be waiting for some tidings of me. If the Barters were alone concerned, it would be bad enough; but how can I make Edward understand that Mr. Mitchell had nothing whatever to do with my going on the excursion—that not so much as a thought of the man ever entered my head? And Edward is so sensible

on every other subject. What a delightful meeting that will be to-morrow!" and she immediately fell to dramatizing it. With a sudden little shudder she fancied herself opening the garden gate in the broad daylight and wearily dragging her feet up the piazza steps — like a returned repentant wife terrified at the thought of her probable reception. Then she tried to imagine a happier dénouement, Edward's wild joy at holding her in his arms again — but here her invention somehow flagged and failed.

Finally Helen threw herself, partly disrobed, on the narrow berth; but not to sleep. Throughout the endless night she heard the ship's bell strike the hours and half hours.

V

I RATHER guess we are in for it," said Morton Bangs, removing the beaded moisture from his cap by striking it smartly against the taff-rail. "This fog means business."

"Business," repeated Edward Brandon in a tone of deep disgust, "what in the deuce do you mean by business?"

"I intended to intimate that it has come to stay."

"For how long, do you think?" Brandon asked anxiously.

"As long as it pleases. I've known a fog of this complexion to last two or three days. But one can never know. Maybe it will lift by the next

tide, and maybe it will hold on until daybreak."

"The devil!"

A colloquy similar in essence, though different in form, had taken place somewhat earlier in the afternoon on the deck of the Pelican.

"What's the correct time?" inquired Preston.

"It will be two bells in a minute," said Beverly, looking at his watch.

"Where are we, anyhow?"

"Well, we are nowhere in particular," observed Bangs cheerfully. "Lynn is over there in some direction. I sighted Egg Rock on the port bow just before the fog got its back up."

"Can't we run into Lynn Harbor?" asked Brandon, "or Swampscott, or some other infernal place?"

"Some other infernal place, maybe," answered Bangs, "but not Lynn Harbor."

"Can't we, can't we?" cried Brandon, whose face had grown sharp and pallid within the last half hour.

"My boy," said Morton Bangs, "the wind's as dead as Julius Cæsar."

"But I've got to be home by 7.30!"

"Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home!"

hummed Beverly, with an instinct for appropriate music.

"If you're in a great hurry, Brandon," said Bangs, "perhaps you had better get out and walk."

"Steward," Preston shouted down the hatchway, "Mr. Brandon's overshoes!"

This levity so little harmonized

with Brandon's unhappy frame of mind that he turned his shoulder on the group and went forward.

"What will Nelly say to me?" he muttered. "How will she take it? I can fancy! I vow I shall actually be afraid to face her to-morrow morning. Her disapproval of me, even in a slight matter, is a thing I can't stand. I may put on superior airs and carry my nose as high as I will, but there's no disguising the fact that I'm tied to the apron-string of that dear woman."

The sudden rush of anchor-chains, followed by the vicious plunge of the anchor, interrupted him for a few seconds. A dense white fog, like a wall, had now shut them off from the rest of the world.

"She will have just cause to re-

proach me," Brandon went on, in his meditation ; " my thoughtlessness was simply cruel. She can't of course have the dimmest idea of my whereabouts. Her first thought will be that I've tumbled into the harbor, and she's entirely capable of setting the drag-nets at work. Why did n't I have the manhood to tell Liza where I was going? Then this cursed fog would have explained my detention, and though Nelly might have worried more or less, she would n't have been torn to pieces by every horrible conjecture. I am not worthy of her; she ought to be glad to have me disappear permanently. I wonder what she is up to now. If she's fretting about me as I'm fretting about her, the poor child is not having a good time. Not one of the boys here has any more

heart than a brickbat. I've told them that my wife does n't know I'm off yachting, and they seem to think the situation facetious." At this point Brandon paused, and sent a scowl aft, where his shipmates were chatting and laughing unconcernedly. "When I listen to those fellows, I begin to understand what a holy joy it must be to a mob now and then to destroy a man and a brother."

"Brandon, my dear boy," cried Preston, "this will never do. You look like the Ancient Mariner after he'd eaten the canary—I mean after he'd shot the albatross. Cheer up!"

"Peabody Preston, if I had been the Ancient Mariner, and you had been a passenger on board that ship, it is n't the albatross that would have got killed."

“Of course not — you’d have missed the bird and hit one of the crew. I know how you shoot. No man’s life would have been safe an instant — except when you were aiming at him. Oh, you need n’t explain! I understood your bloodthirsty insinuation.”

Brandon cast a homicidal look on the speaker, and then turning away stood and glared at the fog.

It was very merry in the cabin that night, with bright talk at dinner, and afterward over the cigars and coffee; but nothing could dispel Edward Brandon’s gloom. It was impossible to laugh him or chaff him out of his dejection, and benevolent efforts to that end were not wanting on the part of his companions. There seemed to Brandon a demoniacal note

in their hilarity. He turned in early, and lay in his bunk sleepless, smoking incalculable cigarettes. Somewhere towards midnight he called out:

"I wish to the Lord that somebody would n't bang that bell every two minutes!"

"Silence that dreadful bell!" cried Beverly, throwing himself into the attitude of the Moor of Venice; "it frights the yacht from her propriety."

Brandon got up and slammed to his door, which had sprung open. It was not until the lantern in the fore-rigging began to pale in the dawn that the wretched man fell asleep.

VI

LIZA sat up until nearly twelve o'clock that night, awaiting the return of her master and mistress, and then went to bed in a state of wonderment. In the same state of wonderment she was mechanically laying the breakfast-table the next morning, when Mrs. Brandon walked into the dining-room. There were dark circles under her eyes, and her manner betrayed suppressed agitation. She had a hundred questions to put to Liza, but only one rose to Helen's lips as she hurriedly threw aside her wraps:

"Has Mr. Brandon come down yet, Liza?"

Now Mr. Brandon had always been especially pleasant with Liza, and, to use her own phrasing of it, she was not going to give him away; so she replied very demurely:

"No, ma'am;" but the girl had no sooner spoken the words than she caught her breath, and added, "Yes, ma'am. I did n't know he had left his room. He's in the garden, ma'am."

Helen glanced through the window and saw her husband leisurely shutting the gate behind him, as if he had just returned from one of his eccentric morning strolls. He carried a light overcoat on his arm, a circumstance that did not impress her, for there was always a chill in the early day at the seaside. Mr. Brandon halted abstractedly halfway up the walk, and pulled a rose from an overhanging bush.

When Mr. Brandon entered the room his wife was seated at the coffee-urn and in the act of reaching out one hand to take a cup from the tray. There was a wan, tentative smile on her face as she lifted the fatigued blue eyes, and said :

“ Good-morning, dear ! ”

The reception was so vastly different from anything he had expected as to stagger him for a second or two, until he reflected that of course Helen was not going to make a scene in the presence of the servant. She was too proud and too tactful for that. It was a piece of comedy on the part of his wife — a bit of that adroit acting in which women excel ; and he gratefully accepted the situation. He crossed over to her chair, and, laying the rose beside Helen's

plate, stooped down and kissed her as usual. She shot a swift sideway glance at him from under her lashes, and foreboded the storm that lay behind all that assumed composure.

The breakfast proceeded as on ordinary mornings, except that both were unwontedly silent and preoccupied. The unavoidable explanation pressed heavily upon them. Every instant Edward was expecting that Liza would be dismissed, and then he should catch it! But nothing was farther from Helen's desire than to be left alone, just yet, with her husband. Liza was quick enough to perceive this, and lent herself to the sundry little stratagems employed to detain her.

The girl, meanwhile, was dying with curiosity and perplexity. The

master and mistress had spent the night away, and neither appeared to be aware that the other had done so. They had quitted the house separately, and returned separately. What did it mean? Liza in her time had assisted at various domestic dramas, but nothing resembling this.

One seemingly perilous interval occurred near the close of the meal, when Liza was summoned from the room by a ring at the door-bell. "Now he's going to speak!" said Helen to herself, with a tremor. "Here's her opportunity!" thought Edward. But nothing happened, to their mutual surprise and relief.

The breakfast was late, and had scarcely come to an end when it was time for Mr. Brandon to take

his train to Boston. A momentary panic seized both husband and wife at the prospect of those one or two minutes alone together at the garden gate; but the reflection that the spot was of all spots the least adapted to a family discussion reassured them.

The parting took place, a more hurried parting than customary, and neither had spoken of what lay nearest to their hearts. Mr. Brandon went to town wondering at Helen's singular forbearance, while Helen began to feel a chill creeping over her as she reflected on Edward's suppression of his just displeasure. Her transgression had been very great — every moment it seemed to her less and less forgivable — and he had treated the matter with cold indifference. He no

longer loved her! They were joining, or had already joined, that long procession of piteous couples who keep up the outside semblance of marriage, having really nothing left but the thin shell of vanished happiness.

On reëntering the house, Mrs. Brandon called Liza into the parlor.

"Liza," she said, "I am in very great trouble. Unfortunately I did not let Mr. Brandon know yesterday that I was going with Mr. and Mrs. Barter for a short sail in their yacht. We got caught in a fog and were unable to reach land until seven o'clock this morning. I am afraid Mr. Brandon is very angry with me, so angry that he has not trusted himself to speak to me on the subject. What

happened yesterday? What did he say when he returned home?"

"He asked where you had gone, ma'am, and I told him I did n't know. Then he asked who came and took you away, and I told him nobody."

"Was he not much surprised and disturbed?"

"He did n't seem quite pleased, ma'am."

"Pleased! What else did he say?"

"He did n't say anything else."

"You mean that that was *all* he said?"

"Yes, ma'am. Then he ordered lunch—and went out."

"In search of me," was Helen's mental comment. "And when he returned?"

"He dined out, ma'am—at least he did n't have dinner here."

"In the course of the evening, before you went to bed, did he make any remark about my absence?"

"I did n't hear him make any remark," replied Liza, with the soul of truth looking through her gray eyes.

"Did n't he — did n't you hear him walking the floor, or moving around, or something, during the night?"

"No, ma'am," said the girl, who had all she could do to bite off the smile that was nibbling at the corners of her mouth.

"And when he came down this morning?"

"I did n't see him, ma'am, as you know. He was standing in the garden when I saw him first."

"Did he sit up very late last night?"

"I'm not sure, ma'am, but I think

so. He looked it just now," added Liza, who was growing restless.

"And this is absolutely everything you have to tell me?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Then it was scarcely worth while to question you. That will do, Liza. You certainly are a most observing girl."

"Yes, ma'am."

Any sarcasm not of the coarsest fibre was quite wasted on Liza.

The coolness with which her husband had seemed to accept her unexplained disappearance mystified and appalled Helen. It did not appear that he had scoured the water-front much, or ransacked the woodlands extensively on her account. Even if he had suspected, or in some way ascertained, where she was, a slight

show of interest would have been becoming in him. Liza's report was inadequate, and presumably inaccurate. There was a nameless something in the girl's manner that vexed Mrs. Brandon, and her vexation was farther increased during the forenoon by the fancy that she detected from time to time a curious, enigmatical expression on Liza's face. Could it be possible that the girl, who had been made much of by both Mr. Brandon and herself, and perhaps a little spoiled, was daring for an instant to sit in judgment on what had occurred? "No, my nerves are all broken up," thought Helen, "and I am just imagining that she looks at me strangely. Now she is doing it again!"

Mr. Brandon came home on the

noon express. The lunch was marked by the same reticence and embarrassment as the morning repast. Each waited for the other to open fire from a hitherto masked battery, but neither made any demonstration.

It was one of Mrs. Brandon's Wednesdays, when a number of outlying friends and acquaintances always dropped in to take a cup of tea with her. Mr. Brandon was seldom in evidence at these functions, and this day he took himself off earlier than usual, with no word of notice to Helen, who was engaged in a forlorn fashion in preparing for her guests. She had been very unhappy that night on the Pelican, but her unhappiness, compared with the present state of suspense, began to fade out in the recollecting. Why did he not call her

to an account for what she had done? Why this inexplicable silence? Was he waiting for her to come to him and implore his pardon? She was ready to do that now, if he would but give the slightest sign that such was his desire. He had made no such sign. His care-drawn face showed that he had suffered, or was suffering, a great strain. No amount of self-control could hide that. As Edward Brandon went down the piazza steps, Helen stood in the middle of the sitting-room and impulsively reached out her arms, as if to bring him back. But he was gone.

Mr. Brandon wandered over to the Eastern Yacht Club in a very dejected mood. Helen had not reproached him even by a look for his unfeeling treatment of her, and this an-

gelic patience was becoming a heavier punishment to him than any angry word could have inflicted. From the moment he met Helen at breakfast until now, he had been in purgatory. A more advanced stage of expiation was becoming almost preferable. It was not possible to bear it much longer. He resolved to go and beg her forgiveness the moment that stupid tea business was over. She evidently had already forgiven him, like the seraph she was, but he wanted to hear her tell him so. How pale the dear girl looked at breakfast and lunch, and how bravely she hid the hurt, like — what was his name? — the Spartan boy with the fox tucked under his tunic.

Then his point of view abruptly changed, and the rose-color faded out.

Perhaps Helen's composure was the expression of complete estrangement and implacable disdain. His staying away all night would naturally have alarmed her, and his return ought to have lifted a heavy load from her heart; but she had ignored the whole business in a fashion that was simply blood-curdling.

"I'll be hanged if I understand it," Brandon said to himself. "I wish I could get hold of Liza alone for five or ten minutes; but the minx seems to keep out of my way on purpose. I'd like to know exactly what Nelly said and did last night. It would give me a clew to the actual state of her mind and be a help. I don't see how I am going to explain my utter thoughtlessness. I have n't the ghost of an excuse, and I shall be sure to

say the wrong thing; I always do. Perhaps I had better write what I have to say. I'll do it this very instant, and send it over to the cottage by messenger. Maybe it will make the rest of the afternoon happier for her."

He was standing in the reading-room of the clubhouse when this expedient occurred to him. In the apartment were several desks amply furnished with stationery. Edward seated himself at the one nearest at hand and proceeded with much deliberation to select a stub-pen.

"I wish the note-paper did n't have the club's burgee stuck up in the corner—it's altogether too suggestive; but it can't be helped;" and he began writing:—



Eastern Yacht Club.
Marblehead, Mass.

My dear girl:

When I married you five years ago, I more than half suspected that I was marrying an angel, and now I am positive of it. I can never forgive myself for the anxiety and suffering I must have caused you last night, and your divine sweetness in not upbraiding me with it is something I shall ever

"I beg pardon for interrupting you, Mr. Brandon," said Commodore Barter, approaching from the other end of the room, "but I wish to say how very sorry I am that we were obliged to keep Mrs. Brandon a prisoner all night. That devilish fog was unfortunate. But you're an old

yachtsman, you understand these mishaps, and I trust that your wife's prolonged absence did n't give you too much uneasiness."

Brandon dropped his pen, and stared at the Commodore.

So Helen had gone with the Barbers after all — had been away the whole night! The same fog that had nipped him had nipped her! Talk about the hand of Providence! Was it possible that she was ignorant of his own little adventure, as he had been ignorant of hers? It was absolutely certain — unless Liza had chattered, which she did not appear to have done. No wonder Helen had n't pitched into him!

"Don't mention it, Commodore!" cried Brandon, rising quickly from his chair and wringing the elder

man's hand with a cordiality that slightly surprised him. "I knew that my wife was perfectly safe with you."

If Edward Brandon was ever glad of anything in his life, it was of Helen's deceitful behavior. He had to shake hands again with the Commodore before that gentleman departed, and could have passed the remainder of the day pleasantly in that manual exercise. Had Mr. Mitchell appeared at this instant with "the Venus de Medici" hanging on his arm, Edward Brandon would have slapped him on the back and invited the pair to champagne.

Presently Brandon tore his half-completed note into minute pieces, which he sifted into the waste-paper basket. Descending from the club-

house veranda to the seaward-facing lawn, where he halted a few seconds to light a cigar, he treated himself to the following reflections :

“ I ’ll just loaf round here until Nelly has scattered her tea leaves. It’s as clear as day she does n’t dream of the scrape I got into last night, and I don’t see why I should n’t have a bit of fun with her before she discovers it. I’ll be very indignant and deeply hurt, and accuse her of coquetting indecorously with Barter’s brother-in-law. I’ll make a strong point of that. Come to think of it,” here he paused and snipped off his cigar-ash a trifle impatiently, “ that fellow Mitchell is a public nuisance. I don’t want to do him injustice, but he seems to me to have all the symptoms of an ass. Nelly knew very well that he was to

be of the party, and a little serious talking to—but, confound it! what shall I have to say by and by touching the Spitfire transaction? That's a bad handicap for me. What in the devil possessed me to set foot in that old tub, anyway! Perhaps I had better drop Mitchell, and stick to the main issue. It will be more dignified. In going with Bangs I did n't deceive Nelly; in going with the Barters after pretending to refuse their invitation, she did deceive me. The two cases are not in the least analogous."

Mr. Brandon continued to pace up and down the lawn, pursuing this masculine train of reasoning, until his cigar was finished; then he returned to the reading-room and occupied himself by looking over the magazines for August.

Mrs. Brandon's supposed last caller had come and gone, and she was sitting meditatively on an ottoman near the fireplace, when Liza appeared at the parlor door and announced —

“ Mr. Morton Bangs.”

“ My dear madam,” said Mr. Bangs, advancing towards her in his confident breezy manner, “ I come to lay my apologies at your feet. I cannot sufficiently express my regret for what happened. I did n't mean to keep your husband out all night.”

“ All night ! ”

“ Well, practically all night. The fog did n't leave us until five o'clock this morning, when we made directly for Lynn Harbor. I never saw a man in such a state of mind. At one time, I assure you, I thought that Brandon was going to try to swim ashore. I

don't believe I shall ever get him on board the Spitfire again."

"My husband was on the Spitfire yesterday?"

"What! did n't you know?" gasped Mr. Bangs, with a chilling impression that he was somehow putting his foot into it.

"I knew he was somewhere, but but not just where."

"Has n't he told you about it?"

"Mr. Brandon went to town by the early train this morning," said Mrs. Brandon, completely recovering herself, "and he had no opportunity to tell me any of the particulars of his outing. The pleasure of hearing those interesting details is still in store for me," and such a radiant smile broke over her face as seemed to fill the whole dingy little parlor with

bloom. "Won't you let me give you a cup of tea, Mr. Bangs?"

"Thanks, awfully. I want to say again that Brandon was deeply distressed — we all were deeply distressed," he added shamelessly, "at the thought of the anxiety he was occasioning you."

"I was, indeed, very anxious last night."

"So sorry, Mrs. Brandon."

"It was not your fault, Mr. Bangs," said Helen magnanimously.

"So kind! It was n't Brandon's, either. The fog did it all. When we met him coming down on the noon train" —

"The noon train!" Helen repeated to herself, and the perplexity went up into her eyebrows. "Why did n't Liza tell her that?"

—“Brandon flatly refused to go with us: but just as we were taking a — some apollinaris before lunch he dropped into the club and said he had changed his programme. Of course we were glad, he’s such delightful, animating company; but we were sorry enough afterward. The state of that youth when we got becalmed off Egg Rock (*he* did n’t get becalmed!), and the language he used — only one lump, dear lady.”

Mrs. Brandon was oblivious of the exact moment when Mr. Morton Bangs took his leave. The room was too small and hot to hold her; she could not breathe indoors. Pushing aside the portière which draped one of the windows, she stepped out on the piazza. The cool air revived her and gave her a chance to think a lit-

tle. Edward had evidently returned home earlier than he expected, and finding her absent, had gone off with Mr. Bangs and his horrid friends and got befogged on the Spitfire, just as she had got befogged on the Pelican. And here the two of them had been going about in deadly fear of each other, neither having the faintest suspicion of the other's reprehensible conduct. Was there ever anything so deliciously absurd! If no one had told Edward—and who was to tell him?—he was still in the dark relative to her, and she decided to make a little scene when he came home. Her nerves had been at such a tension ever since yesterday afternoon that a few honest tears would be easy to shed. And had n't Edward been expecting them!

This idea was passing through Helen's brain when she saw her husband come swinging down the street with an elasticity of gait that had been a lost art to him for the last twelve or fourteen hours. He came smiling along the shell-paved walk, and stood in front of her. Then Helen's malicious plan instantly fell to pieces, for she saw by his face that he knew, and he saw that she knew, and with a great laugh, to which Helen added a merry contralto, Edward sprang up the piazza steps and took her in his arms.

Any one passing the cottage at the moment would have been dead certain that it was a honeymoon.

HIS GRACE THE DUKE

HIS GRACE THE DUKE

HAS the Duke of Suffolk no friends? If an English duke is without friends, or what pass for such, who on this earth can expect to have any? An English duke is a very great personage—even to democracy on this side the water. Our most reluctant doors turn quickly on their hinges at his faintest knock. If he chance to occupy our guest-room for a night, a glamour hangs over the apartment forever. We sow bitterness in the heart of Mrs. Leo Hunter by incidentally remarking, "Yes; this is where we put the duke." Beauty strews the roses of her cheek, if one may say it, at his

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feet. A very great personage, indeed, with revenues (sometimes) that have their fountain-head in the immemorial past; the owner of half a dozen mossy villages, or perhaps a fat slice of London; a sojourner in spacious town houses and ancient castles stuffed with bric-à-brac and powdered lackeys. In his hand lie gifts and offices, and the mouth of the hungry placeman waters at sight of him; the hat of the poor curate out of situation lifts itself instinctively. His Grace is not merely a man of the moment, but a precious mosaic of august ancestors, a personality made almost sacred by precedent. He stands next to the throne, and if he but smile on the various human strata below him, who is not touched by his condescension?

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Is it not a remarkable circumstance, then, or does it not at least seem remarkable, that the Duke of Suffolk, as I shall presently show, has no friends? Yet, however incredible it may appear on the surface, the matter is simple and rational enough at bottom; for I am speaking of that last Duke of Suffolk, who in Bloody Mary's time was always getting himself into trouble, and finally lost his head — not figuratively. Strangely enough, he is still extant, though in a much altered fashion. His revenues have taken wing; his retainers are scattered; and there is not a courtier or a dependent alive who cares a farthing whether my lord smiles or frowns. Were this poor, dismantled old duke to make even an excellent

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jest—a thing he never did in the course of the sixteenth century—there is not a sycophant of his left to applaud it. In all the broad realm of England there is none so poor to do him reverence. Spacious town houses and haughty castles with defective drainage know him no more. His name may not be found in the London directory, nor does it figure in any local guide-book that I have ever seen, excepting one. His Grace dwells obscurely in a dismal little shell of a church in the Minories, alone and disregarded. From time to time, to be sure, some stray, irrepressible Yankee tourist, learning—the Lord knows how—that the duke is in town, drops in upon his solitude; but no one else, or nearly no one else. The tumultuous tide of

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London life surges and sweeps around him, but he is not of it.

On the 23d of February, in the year 1554, Henry Grey, Duke of Suffolk, the father of a nine days' queen and the ingenious architect of his own calamity, was led from his chamber in the Tower to a spot on Tower Hill, and promptly decapitated, as a slight testimonial of Queen Mary's appreciation of the part he had played in Northumberland's conspiracy and some collateral enterprises. Thus, like Columbus, he got another world for his recompense.

This is known of all men, or nearly all men; but not one in a thousand of those who know it is cognizant of the fact that the head of the Duke of Suffolk, in an almost perfect state of preservation, can be seen to this

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day in a shabby old church somewhere near the Thames, at the lower end of the city — the Church of Holy Trinity. It may be noted here, not irrelevantly, that an interview with his Grace costs from two shillings to three and sixpence per head — your own head, I mean.

It appears that shortly after the execution of the duke — on the night following, it is said — this fragment of him was secured by some faithful servant, and taken to a neighboring religious house in the Minories, where it was carefully packed in tannin, and where it lay hidden for many and many a year. The secret of its existence was not forgotten by the few who held it, and the authenticity of the relic is generally accepted, though there are iconoclasts who believe it

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to be the head of Edmund de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk, who also passed by the way of Tower Hill in 1513. But the Dantesque line of the nose and the arch of the eyebrow of the skull are duplicated in the duke's portrait in the National Portrait Gallery, and would seem to settle the question.

After the cruel fires of Smithfield and Oxford were burned out, and Protestantism, with Elizabeth, had come in again, and England awoke as from a nightmare — when this blessed day had dawned, the head was brought forth from its sequestration, and became an item in the pious assets of the church in which it had found sanctuary. Just when the exhumation took place, and the circumstances attending it, are unrecorded.

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It was only by chance, during a stay in London several years ago, that these details came into my possession; but they were no sooner mine than a desire seized me to look upon the countenance of a man who had died on Tower Hill nearly three hundred and fifty years before. Surely a New Englander's hunger for antiquity could not leave such a morsel as that untouched.

Breakfasting one morning with an old London acquaintance, a gentleman named Blount, I invited him to accompany me on my pilgrimage to the Minories. There was kindness in his ready acceptance; for the last thing to interest the average Londoner is that charm of historical association which makes London the Mecca of Americans. Blount

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is a most intelligent young fellow, though neither a bookman nor an antiquarian, and he confessed, with the characteristic candor of his island, that he had n't heard that the Duke of Suffolk was dead!

"Only in a general way, don't you know," he added. "They polished off so many armor-plated old duffers in those days that one would have to make a business of it in order to keep the run of them."

His views concerning the geography of the Minorities were also lacking in the quality of positiveness.

"The cabby will know how to get us there," suggested Blount optimistically.

But the driver of the hansom we picked up on Piccadilly did not seem so sanguine. "The Minorities — the

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Minories," he repeated, smiling in a constrained, amused way, as if he thought that perhaps "the Minories" might be a kind of shell-fish. He somehow reminded me of the gentleman who asked, "What *are* Pericles?" The truth is, the London season was at its height, and the man did not care for so long a course, there being more shillings in the briefer trips.

However, as we had possession of the hansom, and as possession is nine points of the law, we directed him to take us to St. Paul's Churchyard, where we purposed to make further inquiries.

Our inquiries were destined to extend far beyond that limit, for there seemed to be a dearth of exact information as to where the Church

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of Holy Trinity was located. Yet the church, rebuilt in 1706, covers the site of a once famous convent, founded in 1293 by Blanche, Queen of Navarre, for the sisterhood of "Poor Clares." The convent of the Minoresses gave its name to a district which, according to Stow the historiographer, was formerly occupied by "divers fair and large storehouses for armour and habiliments of war, with divers workhouses to the same purpose." Mr. Pepys, in his diary, has frequent references to the Minories, and often went there on business. On March 24, 1663, he writes: "Thence Sir J. Minnes and I homewards, calling at Browne's the mathematician in the Minnerys, with a design of buying White's ruler to measure wood with, but could not

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agree on the price. So home, and to dinner." Dear old Pepys! he always makes a picture of himself. One can almost see him in the stuffy little shop, haggling with Browne over the price of White's ruler. It is still a street for shops in Browne's line of trade. Here, above the door of John Owen, dealer in nautical and astronomical instruments, may be observed the wooden image of the Little Midshipman, introduced to all the world by Mr. Dickens in the pages of "Dombey and Son"—the Little Midshipman, with one leg still thrust forward, and the preposterous sextant at his eye, taking careful observations of nothing.

But to return to the church. Singularly enough, the ground upon which it stands is a portion of the

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handsome estate granted by Edward VI. to the Duke of Suffolk in smoother days. So, when all is said, there seems a sort of poetic fitness in his occupancy of the place. I wish it had been of easier access.

I do not intend to enumerate the difficulties we encountered in discovering the Duke's claustral abode. To mention half of them would be to give to my slight structure of narrative a portico vastly larger than the edifice itself.

After a tedious drive through a labyrinth of squalid streets and alleys — after much filling and backing and a seemingly fruitless expenditure of horse — we finally found ourselves knocking at a heavily clamped door of wrinkled oak, obviously belonging to an ancient building, though it looked

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no older than the surrounding despondent brickwork. There was a bit of south wall, however, not built within the memory or record of man.

The door presently swung back on its rheumatic hinges, and we were admitted into the vestibule by a man who made no question of our right to enter—the verger, apparently: a middle-aged person, slender and pallid, as if he were accustomed to dwell much in damp subterranean places. He had the fragile, waxen look of some vegetable that has eccentrically sprouted in a cellar. It was no strain on the imagination to fancy that he had been born in the crypt. Making a furtive motion of one hand to his forehead by way of salute, the man threw open a second door, and ushered us into the church, a high-

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arched space filled with gloom that appeared to have soured and turned into a stale odor. The heavy balks of time-stained oak that supported the roof were half lost in the dimness overhead. The London idea of daylight drifted in through several tall, narrow windows of smoky glass set in lead, and blended genially with the pervading dust.

The church was scarcely larger than an ordinary chapel, and contained nothing of note. There were some poor monuments to the Dartmouth family, and here and there a hideous mural tablet to nobody in particular. The woodwork was black with age, and not noticeable for its carving. A registry kept here of those who died in the parish during the plague of 1665 scarcely stimulated

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curiosity; nor could the imagination be widely dilated by the circumstance that the body of Sir Philip Sidney once lay in state in the chancel, while preparations were making in St. Paul's for national obsequies to the hero of Zutphen. The *pièce de résistance* — indeed, the sole dish of the banquet — was clearly that head which, three centuries and more ago, had had so little discretion as to get itself chopped off. I was beginning to query if the whole thing were not a fable, when Blount, with an assumed air of sprightly interest, demanded to see the relic.

“Certingly, sir,” said the man, stroking a fungus growth of grayish side whiskers. “I wishes there was more gentlemen in your way of thinking; but 'ardly nobody cares for it

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nowadays, and it is a *most* hinterest-ing hobject. If it was in the British Museum, sir, there'd be no hend of ladies and gentlemen flocking to look at it. But this is n't the British Museum, sir."

It was not; but the twilight, and the silence, and the loneliness of the place made it the more proper environment.

"You must have some visitors, however," I suggested.

"Mostly Hamericans, sir. Larst week, sir"—and a wan light that would have been a smile on any other face glimmered through the man's pallor—"larst week, sir, there was a gent'ere as wanted to buy the dook."

I recognized my countryman!

"A descendant of the Greys, no doubt," I remarked brazenly.

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"Begging your parding, sir, this branch of the family was hextinct in Mary Tudor's reign, or shortly hafter."

"Well," said Blount, "since you did n't sell his Grace, suppose you let us have a look at him."

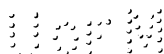
Taking down a key suspended against the wall on a nail, the verger unlocked a cupboard, and drew forth from its pit-like darkness a tin box, perhaps eighteen inches in height and twelve inches square, containing the head. This he removed from the case, and carefully placed in my hands, a little to my surprise. A bodiless head, I am convinced, has dramatic qualities that somehow do not appertain in a like degree to a headless body. The dead duke in his entirety would not have caused

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me the same start. After an instant of wavering, I carried the relic into the light of one of the windows for closer inspection, Blount meanwhile looking over my shoulder.

"'E used to 'ave a very good 'ead of 'air," remarked the verger, "but not in my time; in my great-grandfather's, maybe."

A few spears of brittle hair—not more than five or six at most—now turned to a reddish brown, like the dried fibres of the cocoanut, still adhered to the cranium. At the base of the severed vertebra I noticed a deep indentation, showing that the executioner had faltered at first, and had been obliged to strike a second blow in order to complete his work. A thin integument, yellowed in the process of embalming, like that of a



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mummy, completely covered the skull, which was in no manner repulsive. It might have been a piece of mediæval carving in dark wood, found in some chantry choir, or an amiable gargoyle from a cathedral roof.

"There's a sort of hagony in that hupper lip, don't you think, sir?"

The verger's remark was purely perfunctory, a sample of his elegiac stock in trade. Skulls have an unpleasant habit of looking sardonic or dissatisfied, and no wonder. This one retained a serene human expression such as I never saw in any other.

"No," I said. "If his Grace had fallen asleep in his armchair after a soothing dinner, his mien could not have been more placid."

As I gazed upon the sharply cut features, they suddenly seemed famil-

❖ ❖ ❖

iar, and I had that odd feeling, which has often come to me in cathedral towns in England, and especially during my walks through the older sections of old London — the impression of having once been a part of it all, as possibly I was in some remote period. At this instant, with my very touch upon a tangible something of that haunting Past — at this instant, I repeat, the gloomy church, and Blount, and the verger, and all of the life that is, slipped away from me, and I was standing on Tower Hill with a throng of other men-at-arms, keeping back the motley London rabble at the point of our halberds — rude, ill-begotten knaves, that ever rejoice at the downfall of their betters.

It is a shrewish winter morning, and nipping airs creep up, unwanted,

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from the river; for we have been standing here these three hours, chilled to the bone, under the bend of that sullen sky. Fit weather for such work, say I. Scarcely a day but a head falls. Within the fortnight my Lord Guilford, and the Lady Jane — and she only in her fivers — and others hastening on! 'T is best not be born too near the purple. Perhaps 't were better not be born at all. What times are these! — with the king's death, and the plottings, and the burnings, and the bodies of men hanging from gibbets everywhere, in Southwark and Westminster, at Temple Bar and Charing Cross — upward of tenscore of silly fellows that had no more brains than to dabble in sedition at mad Wyatt's bidding.

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What times indeed! The carven images, with new heads on, have crept forth from their hiding; we say mass once more, and God hath come back to us in a wafer — “the baker made him,” quoth poor Lady Jane! (The sweet soul was as ready with her blithe word as a wench at a fair.) Kings come and go, but Smithfield fires die not down. Now the Catholic burns, and now the heretic — and both for God’s glory. Methinks the sum of evil done on this earth through malice is small by side of the evil done with purblind good intent. ’Twixt fool and knave, the knave is the safer man. There’s no end to the foolishness of the fool, but the knave hath the limits of his intelligence. The very want of wit that stops the one keeps the other a-going.

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Ah, will it ever be merry world in England again, when a mortal may eat his crust and drink his pint without fear of halter or fagot? What with the cruel bishops, and the Hot Gospellers — crazy folk all! — and this threatened Spanish marriage, peace is not like to thrive. Why should English Mary be so set to wed with a black Spaniard! How got she such a bee in her bonnet to sting us all? Faith, now I think on it, she's one half Spain through Catherine of Arragon.

Hark! From somewhere in the Tower the sound of a tolling bell is blown to us across the open. At last! A gate is flung back, and through the archway advances a little group of men. The light sparkles on the breastplates and morions of the

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guards in front. The rest are in sad-colored clothes. In that group, methinks, are two or three that need be in no hot haste to get here! On they come, slowly, solemnly, between the double lines of steel, the spearmen and the archers. Nearer and nearer, pausing not, nor hurrying. And now they reach the spot.

How pale my lord is, holding in his hand a lemon stuck with cloves for his refreshment! And yet he wears a brave front. He does not look at me, but in days that were not heavy like this day my lord knew me right well, for I have many a time ridden behind him to the Duke of Northumberland's county seat, near Isleworth by the Thames. Perchance 't was even there, at Syon House, they spun the web that tripped them—and I

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not sniffing treason the while! My lord was not wise to mix himself in such dark matters. I pray he make a fair end of it, like to that angel his daughter, who, though no queen, poor soul! laid down her life in queenly fashion. These great folk, who have everything soft to make their beds of — so they throw it not away — have somehow learned to die as stoutly as any of the baser sort, who are accustomed. May it be so with my lord! . . .

He motions as if he would speak to the multitude. Listen! Yes, thank God! he will die true Protestant; and so, stand back, Sir Priest! He hath no use for thy ghostly services. Stand back! (I breathe this only to myself, else were my neck not worth a ha'penny!) Thus did she wish it in

her prayers, the Lady Jane; thus did she beg him to comport himself—she, at this hour a ten days' saint in heaven. Death shall not turn him from his faith, he says—and proves it. Ah, Master Luther, what a brave seed thou hast sown in Wycliffe's furrow! . . . And now the headsman kneels to beg my lord's forgiveness. "God forgive thee, as I do," he answers gently, and no tremble in the voice! I could weep, were I not a queen's man and under-officer, and dared do it.

And now he binds a handkerchief about his eyes, and now he kneels him to the block. Once more his lips move in speech. What is it he saith? "Lord, into thy hands I commend my spirit!"—

"What you 'ear rattling, sir," ob-

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served the verger, "is a tooth that's dropped hinside. I keeps it there for a curiosity. It seems to hadd to the hinterest."

The spell was broken.

The spell was broken, but the rigid face that confronted me there in the dim light was a face I had known in a foregone age. The bitter morning on Tower Hill, the surging multitude, the headsman with his axe — it was not a dream; it was a memory!

I silently placed the relic in the verger's hands, and turned away, whispering to Blount to fee the man.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Blount, rejoining me at the church door. Then he said thoughtfully — thoughtfully, that is, for him: "Do you suppose a fellow takes any interest in himself

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after he is dead, or knows what's going on in this world?"

"There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio Blount, than are dreamed of in our philosophy. Perhaps he does."

"Well, then, if a fellow does, that old boy can't be over and above pleased at being made a blooming peep-show of, don't you know."

I agreed with Blount. And now that so many years have gone by — and especially as I have seen the thing myself — it seems to me it would be a proper act for some hand gently to inurn the head of that luckless old nobleman with the rest of him, which lies, it is said, under the chancel pavement of St. Peter's, in the Tower, close by the dust of Anne Boleyn in her pitiful little elm-wood

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shell originally used for holding arrows. This brings me back to my starting point:

Has the Duke of Suffolk no friends?

Since these pages were written, the Church of Holy Trinity has been demolished in the march of improvement. His Grace the Duke has consequently sought a domicile elsewhere; but just where I have had no heart to inquire.

SHAW'S FOLLY



SHAW'S FOLLY

I

MANY years ago an old friend of mine named Shaw made an experiment which, though it failed lamentably, has a kind of interest attaching to it as an early attempt to do in a small way what has since been successfully accomplished on a large scale. My account of the experiment referred to would doubtless have taken the shape of a sober essay on economics, were it not for certain collateral happenings which might have seemed out of place in a serious paper. As I am unwilling to suppress the lighter material, the presentation of the

matter must necessarily be in a different form.

On West Fifteenth Street, and midway between two of those great arteries which stretch up from the commercial heart of the city, stands a block of brownstone English-base-ment houses of that monotonous style of architecture peculiar to New York. From the cornice of the flat, tin-plated roof down to the escutcheon at the keyhole of the area door, these houses are so exactly alike that it has chanced to more than one occupant, returning home late at night, to try his pass-key on the wrong domicile. I imagine that families residing here might gradually come to resemble one another morally and physically, until at last

it would make very little difference which front door they used. This would be the natural result, if the said families did not occasionally pile their household belongings into huge vans, and move themselves to another row of buildings of the same enervating uniformity.

Such complete fusion of identities as I have hinted at as possible had certainly not taken place in this particular block at the moment the present record opens. The three persons who were seated, one May evening long ago, in the rear parlor of the centre house in the series bore slight resemblance, I fancy, to any other three persons assembled under the roofs which impartially covered the various cells of that human hive.

The individuals in question were

seated near a round table, upon which stood a drop-light from the chandelier, and consisted of one man and two women. Their relations described themselves at once as those of father, mother, and daughter. The father, a person^o in the early autumn of life, was reading, or pretending to read, the evening newspaper. The mother, also in her sunny prime, held a piece of sewing-work in her hand; held it listlessly, letting the needle take long vacations. The daughter, a handsome girl of eighteen or nineteen, was bending over a novel, from whose pages she lifted her eyes at brief intervals, glancing in a hurried, evasive way at her two elders in turn.

There was something indefinable in the atmosphere of the richly fur-

nished room — a constraint, an anxiety, an air of reticence and hesitation which seemed to communicate itself to the ormolu clock as it slowly and with apparent effort measured out eight strokes, holding back the eighth as if it were deliberating whether or not to tell the whole truth about the hour.

The timepiece had not ceased vibrating (with suppressed emotion, as it were) when the gentleman began to fold up the journal into a small compass, to which he gave a final twist, preparatory to laying it on the table. This he presently did. The elder of the two women let the needle-work slip into her lap, and looked at him anxiously across the newspaper, which now lay writhing and trying to untwist itself on the marble slab.

"Yes, my dear," he remarked, intercepting the interrogation that flitted across her features, "I think I'll drop down to the club for an hour."

The words were spoken lightly, but there was somehow a false note in the lightness. The wife mechanically resumed her sewing, and remained silent. The young girl, who had raised her head quickly, again bent over the page which she had not been reading.

As the man crossed the apartment and stepped into the hall, the women glanced at each other with an enigmatical expression on their faces; but neither of them spoke or moved. The clock, breathing heavily on its black walnut bracket, seemed the only thing alive in the room,

until the street door was heard to close, when the young girl immediately left her seat, and passing swiftly to a window in the front parlor, lifted one corner of the gray holland shade. As she did it, her face showed anxiously in the flare of the street lamp opposite the house.

"Which way has he gone?" asked the elder woman. She had risen, and was standing beside the rocking-chair.

"Toward Sixth Avenue."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, mother."

"And the club is in the other direction?"

The girl nodded her head.

"I can't bear it," said the woman;
"I had no sleep last night. I cannot stand it any longer."

"You mean to follow him, mother?"

"I mean to know what is going on. It is useless for you to argue with me, Elizabeth. I intend to follow him."

The words were spoken in a manner which showed that some action of this sort had previously been opposed by the daughter. The daughter offered no opposition now, but with her lips tightly compressed left the room. She shortly reappeared, bringing some wraps thrown over one arm. A moment afterward the two women descended the brown-stone steps of the house, and paused an instant on the sidewalk.

II

WHEN Augustus Shaw retired from business he was forty-five years old. His withdrawal from the firm of Shaw, Woods and Company was a surprise to the world — that is to say, to such fraction of the world as had had commercial intercourse with him. It was more than a surprise to his father, Elijah Shaw, a remarkably well-preserved old gentleman of eighty, who had not ceased to look upon his son as an immature youth still requiring the oversight of the paternal eye. Shaw senior, who resided in Vermont, was at the time visiting a married daughter in the city.

"I don't approve of it," said the old gentleman. "Augustus has thrown up a business that was coining money like a mint; and that's not the worst of it. What will become of the boy, with nothing to do from morning till night? He'll be sure to tumble into some sort of foolishness. It's very dangerous at his age to have no regular employment. A country life is the only thing for Augustus now. He ought to buy some of those neglected lands up in New Hampshire, and become an abandoned farmer. A big city full of pitfalls like New York is no place for him. It's no place for anybody. If a man's poor, he can't live here; and if he's rich, he'd better not."

Augustus's view of the case was this: For twenty years and upward

he had been a slave to business, a supremely successful slave as it happened, and he had extracted a certain kind of satisfaction from success merely as success; but the process had tied him down and involved many self-denials. He was now in the prime of life, with a fortune far beyond the dream of the sixteen-year-old Vermont boy, who had walked into New York with twenty dollars in his pocket and the determination suffused throughout him to be a rich man some day. Why should he continue to heap up money until he was a spavined old fellow incapable of getting any comfort out of his accumulations? What was the use of wealth to a man who was obliged to soak his toast in tea and could not ride in his carriage without taking

his rheumatism along with him? A good dinner is a mockery when you have no digestion left. He purposed to dine before such calamity should befall him, and to drive out unaccompanied by anything less agreeable than Maria.

Indeed, his plans were in a special manner designed with reference to Mrs. Shaw. During the acquirement of his fortune his home life had been a mere episode; he had never leisurely warmed his hands at his own fireside. He was to open a new account with life. He would take Maria and his daughter to theatres and concerts and picture exhibitions, as he had seldom been able to do when his evenings were his only hours of rest. He would make visits, and give little dinners, and read what's-

his-name's novels, and see something of the social world. The supervision of his investments would give him as much occupation as he desired to have in a business way.

"Augustus has made a mistake," persisted old Mr. Shaw, "and he'll discover it when it's too late. Before twelve months are over he'll assemble and vote himself a fool, mark my prediction, Maria" — for it was to that lady these reassuring words were addressed after having vainly been placed at the disposal of Augustus.

The younger Mr. Shaw's dream of domesticity did not come true at once, nor, indeed, did it ever materialize precisely as he had expected. In settling his relations with the firm a hundred points arose, each entail-

ing some vexatious delay; but finally matters were adjusted, and Augustus Shaw became one of those *rare aves* in our busy American life — a gentleman of leisure.

Immediately on his retirement Mr. Shaw and the family moved to their cottage at Long Branch. The summer passed pleasantly; but Mr. Shaw had never before had so much seaside at one time, and as the season drew to a close he became impatient to get back to the city. The family left Long Branch somewhat in advance of the general exodus, and the first week in September saw them again established in West Fifteenth Street.

After the bloom of novelty was brushed off, Mr. Shaw found that amusement as a permanent occu-

pation was far from being a simple matter. In order to achieve even a moderate success in it, it is indispensable that one should have a long line of ancestors austerey trained in the art of doing nothing. Augustus Shaw could not comply with this requisition. He had come of plain New England people who believed in the gospel of toil, and had practiced it to the end, some on the land and some on the sea. There had been rich Shaws before his time—ship-captains, and farmers, and lawyers—and they had nearly always made a bee-line from the quarter-deck, the plough, or the judicial bench to the family burial-ground. He was the first of his race to withdraw from active life without the special intervention of Providence.

The Shaw family had few acquaintances and no intimates that were not in a manner dependents. Mr. Shaw was a wealthy man for those days — the days just preceding the period when millionaires were to become monotonous — and with a little social tact the Shaw family could easily have made their way. But social tact is an inborn faculty, and the Shaws were without it. On the edge of the great world they continued to live simply and quietly, and, perhaps with the exception of Mr. Shaw, not unhappily. He was the only one of the three lacking internal resources. Mrs. Shaw's heart was in her house-keeping, and Elizabeth led a busy and variegated existence in the realms of fiction. Mr. Shaw was no great reader outside of newspapers. Poli-

tics interested him deeply; but he had no personal aspirations politically, and remained a spectator. When he cut himself adrift from his counting-room he was stranded. It is not to be deduced from all this that Mr. Augustus Shaw was a nonentity. He was a man of unusually keen perceptions and great executive capacity in certain lines. A lapse of judgment had thrown him out of his proper groove.

The Shaws now gave little dinners, according to the programme, and went much to the theatre — too much for Mr. Shaw, who seldom cared for the play, and would vastly have preferred his evening journal and that ten minutes' after-dinner nap which long years of nightly fatigue had crystallized into a custom. But

this was a thing of the past; for even on off nights — the nights of no theatre — the evening journal failed to soothe the restlessness he had generated during the day.

At first he went down town in the forenoons; but a man of leisure in Wall Street is a solecism. Mr. Shaw speedily gave up his visits to the Merchants' Exchange and the contiguous musty offices where his presence once had some meaning; and then the heaviness of the forenoon differed in no respect from the heaviness of the afternoon. Mr. Shaw had got himself elected one of the vice-presidents of a benevolent society. The days when there was a directors' meeting were red-letter days to him. In a word, he was dreadfully bored.

Mrs. Shaw was struck by the surface changes that had taken place in her husband, and presently detected the cause. Home life was plainly insufficient for a man like Augustus, who had been used to managing large enterprises, and he must have outside interests to distract his mind. For one thing, he must have his club to go to — not a literary or an artistic club, nor a mere lunching-place, like the place down town, but an all-round club with a predominant sprinkling of bankers, lawyers, and men of affairs generally. Such an organization was not difficult to find, and nothing was easier than to obtain membership. Mr. Woods, Mr. Shaw's late partner, arranged it with his own club, into which in due time Mr. Shaw was handsomely received.

"Maria never had a better idea," said Augustus, discussing the subject later with his father, whose mind was somewhat disturbed by certain aspects of the case. "Of course, governor, there is card-playing, for those who like it, and the members have their something-and-soda ; but all in a rational way, you understand. Oh, no wildness at all. Quiet, comfortable rooms, with easy-chairs, and newspapers, and good company. I am very glad to meet a lot of my old business acquaintances again."

"Well, Augustus, I hope it is all for the best. What's the use !"

"Maria," observed Mr. Shaw, after Shaw senior had taken his departure, "father is a dear old boy, and the soul of honesty. I owe him everything. If it had n't been for him I should

probably have been somebody else, and then I might n't have married you. Yes, father is a dear old boy; but when he runs down from Vermont for a few weeks' visit to Sodom and Gomorrah, as he calls New York and Brooklyn, I am glad that he stays at my sister's."

The success of Mrs. Shaw's expedient met her desires. The cloud was lifted from the evening fireside. Augustus had somewhere to go. Occasionally he would drop into the club of an afternoon to look over the papers, and twice a week he joined a sedate whist party there. Ultimately, the drama and the opera having more or less palled on the entire family, Mr. Shaw fell into the habit of passing an hour at the club after dinner whenever nothing else intervened.

Just as the clock chimed eight he would fold up his journal, smile pleasantly on Maria and Elizabeth, and depart from the Shaw mansion, leaving the two women wholly contented, one with her hem and the other with her book or magazine. Sometimes the Delaney girls of Waverly Place, or young Simson from over the way — he was suspected of sentiment in connection with Elizabeth — would look in on them. Life flowed smoothly and sunnily with the Shaw family.

But nothing lasts in this mutable world. There is always a little rift ready to develop itself in anybody's lute. One night Elizabeth had a slight faint turn, which alarmed her mother unnecessarily, and Mr. Shaw was sent for. He was not to be found at the club, and the messenger on inquiring

at what hour Mr. Shaw had left was informed by the hall-boy that the gentleman had not been in the club-house since Monday afternoon — it was then Friday. This singular statement distracted Mrs. Shaw's attention for an instant from Elizabeth's faintness, which, moreover, had passed. Of course the hall-boy was mistaken, the stupid hall-boy! Two minutes later, when Augustus returned — seeming to show that he must have started for home just before the messenger reached the club — the matter had faded out of Mrs. Shaw's mind in her relief at Elizabeth's recovery. It did not occur to her until three or four days afterward, as she was sitting alone in the back parlor.

It was one of Mr. Shaw's whist evenings, and Elizabeth had gone to

the theatre with the Delaney girls. Mrs. Shaw's needle came to a dead stop in the hem as the recollection of the hall-boy's statement suddenly drifted into her thought. She ought to have told Augustus about it at the time. She would tell him the moment he came in. How odd of her to have forgotten the circumstance, and with what persistency it seemed to obtrude itself upon her now! All the details of the trivial incident grew curiously vivid. She recalled the expressionless face of James, the indoor man, and the very intonation of his voice, as he said, "The hall-boy says, ma'am, as Mr. Shaw has n't been in the clubhouse since last Monday."

It was eleven o'clock when Elizabeth returned, and Mr. Shaw had not appeared. He never remained out so

late. Something unusual must have happened. Visions of apoplexy and garroters flitted through Mrs. Shaw's imagination. The papers at the time were full of accounts of night assaults on belated pedestrians. It had become fashionable, in a way, to be garroted. Elizabeth had been taken to and from the theatre in the coupé, and Dennis was on the point of turning to drive off to the stable when he received an order to call at the club for Mr. Shaw.

"You need n't sit up, Elizabeth," said her mother, lowering the gas in the hall. "I'll wait for your father. You look tired."

Having sent the servants to bed, Mrs. Shaw seated herself at the parlor window, where the half drawn shade gave her a view of the deserted street, and watched for the carriage.

After what seemed an interminable lapse of time the coupé came back — empty. Mr. Shaw was not in the clubhouse, and had not been there that night!

"That's all, Dennis," Mrs. Shaw managed to say; "the servants don't appear to know Mr. Shaw by sight."

Then she closed the street door, to which she had hastened, and sat down in a chair near the hat-rack. Her first fear for the safety of Augustus had vanished. The idea of apoplexy or garroters would have been welcome if it could have dispelled the unformed apprehensions that now possessed her. Augustus had not gone to the club that night, and he had not gone there the night Elizabeth was taken ill! The hall-boy's report had been correct — it was a part of his duty to take

note of the coming and going of members. Augustus was deceiving her in some way. He had got into some dreadful trouble. His mysterious conduct was inexplicable on any other grounds. These secret movements could mean nothing else. Old Elijah Shaw, at whom they all had laughed, had been right in his dismal forebodings. But in what shape had they come true? A hundred fancies started up in her mind, like spectres indistinct and conjectural. Mrs. Shaw was not naturally a jealous woman; to be sure she had never been tested; but jealousy is a trait that betrays itself without provocation, it crops out in countless illogical directions. She had never given the faintest sign of it, but at this moment Mrs. Shaw, like Othello, was "perplexed in the extreme," and a

strange spasm contracted her heart as she sat there in the dimly lighted hall.

Elizabeth must be told ; indeed, the matter could not be kept from her. Hastily shutting off the gas on the lower floor, Mrs. Shaw groped her way up to Elizabeth's room, and a few minutes afterward the two repaired to Mrs. Shaw's apartment, where they engaged in disjointed conversation while the elder woman was undressing. Elizabeth had come back from Wallack's sleepy and fatigued, but now her expression was animated and her eyes in the subdued light of the chamber had the bloom of sapphires. The girl's excitement, however, was very much less than her mother's. The odd impression that all this was like something in a novel blended itself with the reality of Elizabeth's trouble,

and probably modified it. Her relative composure under the circumstances piqued her mother.

"You will at least admit, Elizabeth," said Mrs. Shaw, tossing her rings into a small jewel-box on the toilet table, "that your father is acting very strangely."

"Yes, mother; I don't understand it."

"He pretends to go to the club every night, and never goes there, it seems. Where, then, *does* he go?"

"Why don't you ask him, mother, when he comes home? I should, if I were you."

"Would you?"

"Yes, mother."

"As he is clearly trying to keep it from us, that would simply put him on his guard."

"But suppose he is n't guarding anything? It is so unlike papa."

"You are talking nonsense, Elizabeth. He *is* guarding something. Do you think it likely he'd tell us what, if we questioned him, since he's doing all he can to hide it? He does n't like to be questioned, even at the best of times. It's one of his ways. He seems to be cultivating some new ones that I have n't got used to. 'So unlike papa'! — Elizabeth, anything is like any man. No, I shall say nothing to your father," continued Mrs. Shaw, whose lips had grown thin and white. "I shall wait, and find out for myself what it all means. I don't intend to be put off with prevarications and half-truths. I intend to discover everything."

"But how will you discover — everything, mother?" said the girl with a perceptible thrill.

"You can help me, Elizabeth, if you choose. If you don't, I shall do it alone."

"Do what?"

"To-morrow night when he goes to his club" — and Mrs. Shaw lingered on the words with a wan, ironical smile — "I shall follow him."

"Oh, don't do that, mother!" cried Elizabeth. "If what seems so mysterious should turn out to be something easily explained, papa would never forgive you. Dear papa! he has never been so nice to us as he has been these last three or four months."

"That's a very unfavorable symptom," replied Mrs. Shaw, with a

worldly cynicism so foreign to her that Elizabeth gave a little start.

At that instant the click of a pass-key was heard in the lock at the street door. Elizabeth gathered her pretty night-wraps about her and fled. Mrs. Shaw reduced the dressing-table gas-jet to a mere speck, and was almost instantly sound asleep.

After an appreciable interval the staircase began to creak, in the ingenious and malicious fashion of staircases after midnight. On the second landing somebody appeared to have run against something, presumably a three-footed stand with a pot plant on it, and a repressed remark was faintly audible. Then Mr. Shaw, carrying a shoe in each hand, passed noiselessly into the conjugal chamber. He at once extinguished the gas, and pro-

ceeded to lay aside his habiliments with that scrupulous care to avoid disturbing anybody which characterizes the man weakly conscious of having stayed out too late. Nevertheless, one or two mischances occurred : a coat was carefully laid over the back of a chair that was not there, and, later, a silver half-dollar slipped from his trousers pocket and rolled along a strip of inlaid flooring not covered by the Turkish rug. It seemed as if the coin was never going to stop rolling. Finally it slapped itself down and then indulged in a series of spasmodic efforts to get up on its rim again. But even that did not awaken Mrs. Shaw.

The breakfast next morning was a gloomy ceremony attended by two female headaches and one male con-

science ill at ease. On the completion of the meal, Mr. Shaw disappeared, probably went down town, and was not seen again until half an hour before dinner. The dinner consisted of the breakfast gloom served in five courses. Mr. Shaw made several overtures to be gay, but meeting no encouragement, fell silent. Mrs. Shaw still showed traces of the previous night's agitation, and Elizabeth's theatre headache still lingered. Dinner over, Mrs. Shaw automatically picked up her needlework, Elizabeth began a new chapter in "Lady Audley's Secret," and Mr. Shaw ostentatiously unfolded the evening newspaper.

Thus were the three members of the Shaw family occupied at the moment of our first sight of them, and

then ensued that brief scene, already rehearsed, in which Mr. Shaw was represented as setting forth for his club, followed rather dramatically by his wife and his daughter Elizabeth.

III

THE two women paused an instant at the foot of the steps, then walked rapidly down the street toward Sixth Avenue. West Fifteenth Street was not then a crowded thoroughfare even by day, and after nightfall the passing was infrequent. Mrs. Shaw and Elizabeth met no one until they were within fifty paces of the avenue, when the elder woman grasped the girl's wrist, and they both halted abruptly. Near the corner was a small confectionery shop, from the door of which Mr. Shaw was leisurely emerging. In his hand he held a white paper parcel tied with ribbon. The shaft of light falling

upon him from the shop window revealed this detail. He walked to the curbstone of the crossing on the avenue and stopped. The constant stream of pedestrians flowing in two opposite directions hid him for a moment from the mother and daughter. Though he had had the advantage of only a three minutes' start, they would have missed him if he had not stepped into the shop to make a purchase.

"He is waiting for a car," said Elizabeth, in a low voice; "an uptown or a downtown car. I wonder which?"

"It does n't matter," answered Mrs. Shaw; "if he takes either we may as well go home. You don't see a cab anywhere, Elizabeth?"

There was no cab in sight, and the

nearest carriage-stand was several blocks away. The jingling bell of an approaching horse-car was now heard. It passed on unhailed, and Mr. Shaw was seen crossing the track to the opposite curb, on reaching which he turned to the left and proceeded down the avenue.

The side of the street he had selected was comparatively deserted, there being few or no shops, and Mrs. Shaw and Elizabeth, hidden by the throng on the parallel sidewalk, could observe unperceived all Mr. Shaw's movements. There was nothing mysterious about them, so far. He walked with the air of a man who had a predetermined destination, but was in no special haste to reach it. Of the three, Elizabeth and her mother were the more likely to invite

notice. They were unused to being on the streets alone at night, and the novelty of it, together with the nature of their purpose, gave to them a faltering, half-terrified manner calculated to attract attention. A policeman on a corner stared them out of countenance, and wheeling partly round watched the receding figures until he lost them in the crowd.

Indeed, other eyes than those of policemen took casual note of the pair. Their costume and gait differentiated them from the frequenters of the Sixth Avenue, for almost every avenue in the great city has its own type; and then Elizabeth's beauty was not of a kind to pass unchallenged anywhere. Twice she was aware that some one turned and followed them for half a block or so;

and once she was ready to drop when a beggar woman lightly touched her on the shoulder.

The sidewalks lay in a glare like that of noonday. Drug-stores, with gaudy purple and orange jars, and drinking-saloons, with knots of hard-featured men lounging at the stained-glass doorways, took turns in accentuating the fatal commonness of the street. The two women passed these latter places shrinkingly. Years afterward, when Miss Shaw was Mrs. Rush Simson, she could not relate the story of that night expedition without throwing a little shiver into the narrative.

Meanwhile Mr. Shaw tranquilly continued his promenade, which threatened to last forever. He had gone perhaps five or six blocks, when

he turned to the right into a cross-street. Proceeding a short distance down this, he again turned to the right, and entered a narrower and less well-lighted thoroughfare. Here his pace slackened. It was evident that he had nearly reached the desired point. A few steps farther on he stopped. Mrs. Shaw and Elizabeth, who had not lost sight of him for a second, were within a dozen yards of the spot where he halted. Had Mr. Shaw suspected their presence he would not have been able to distinguish the two trembling figures blotted out by the black shadow thrown from the high board fence enclosing some vacant lots just opposite. Mr. Shaw himself, standing in a square of light, was distinctly visible.

The street was of seedy aspect —

one of those streets which seem to have started out in life with some pretensions to gentility, but have been unfortunate, and become despondent, and have finally relinquished the struggle. Here and there the old-fashioned moulding of a doorway indicated that the grimy red-brick house to which it belonged had once known happier days, perhaps as the residence of some prosperous Pearl Street merchant in the early forties, who was laughed at for erecting a mansion so far uptown.

It was in front of such a building, though it had recently been painted and otherwise smartened up, that Mr. Shaw halted—a tall building four windows wide, with heavily carved stone lintels. The basement was occupied by a grocery store brilliantly lighted. On each of the three suc-

ceeding floors the closely drawn yellow shades were also illuminated — evidently a well-filled tenement-house of the better class. At the left of the shop a steep flight of stone steps, with iron railings of a bygone pattern, led up to a double door, a wing of which was open. Mr. Shaw mounted these steps and passed into the dusky vestibule without hesitation, like one to whom the topography of the place was perfectly familiar.

Elizabeth and her mother, who had not exchanged a word since they quitted the avenue, stood huddled together, gazing with wonderment at the façade of the house into which Mr. Shaw had disappeared so unexpectedly. Oblivious of everything but the fact that he had crossed the threshold of this strange house as if it had

been the threshold of his own home, they crouched there in the dark, holding their breath, dumb and motionless, like a group of statuary. Over the way a drunken man reeled by singing "When Johnnie Comes Marching Home"; but they neither saw nor heard him.

Possibly five minutes had elapsed when Mrs. Shaw suddenly loosened her hand from Elizabeth's and pointed to a window — a window in the second story. A sharp silhouette of Mr. Shaw's head and bust had fixed itself against the yellow shade. The grotesque shadow was so lifelike that it might have spoken. The slight tuft of hair standing up from the forehead would have made Elizabeth smile if the circumstances had been less sinister and bewildering.

"What can Augustus be doing there?" whispered Mrs. Shaw, finding her voice.

"I cannot imagine, mother," Elizabeth whispered back. "That certainly is papa."

"Unless there are two of him. Why is he in that room? Look, Elizabeth! — he seems to be laughing at something."

The lips of the profile were parted for an instant, but no sound issued from them audible to the outsiders. That laugh was all the more uncanny and phantomish for being unheard.

"What *does* it mean!" exclaimed Mrs. Shaw.

As she spoke, a second shape joined the first — the silhouette of a woman wearing some sort of cap and holding a child, which she tossed up several

times, and then placed in the arms of the other shadow, and then the whole picture vanished like a flash, leaving the bright square of yellow cloth a blank.

The little drama had not lasted sixty seconds. The two spectators in the street below still stood with uplifted faces, incredulous of their own eyes.

"Oh, tell me that we dreamt it, mother!" cried Elizabeth. "Tell me that we're asleep in our beds at home, and this is only a nightmare, the beginning of some horrible dream!"

"I am afraid it is the ending of a happy one, Elizabeth," answered her mother, who had grown strangely calm within the minute. "Let us go back. We will take a car on the avenue. Come!"

IV

WHEN Mr. Shaw returned home that night, Elizabeth, half disrobed, was walking aimlessly about her bedroom; but Mrs. Shaw was seated as usual near the round table in the rear parlor. From its mural bracket the little clock, which appears to perform the rôle of Greek chorus in this recital, announced the hour of ten, as Mr. Shaw entered the apartment. Mrs. Shaw was seated stiffly, and her face, turned three quarters away from the light, remained in shadow. She was very composed and very pale. Her pallor apparently did not escape Mr. Shaw.

“Isn’t your headache any better,

my dear?" he asked, reaching out to take a chair.

She did not reply for several seconds, then she lifted her face, and said: "Augustus, have you brought home the confectionery?"

Mr. Shaw started, and flushed a faint crimson. "The confectionery!" he repeated.

"Augustus," said his wife, rising from the chair, a trifle paler, but retaining her curious self-possession, "I know everything."

"If you know everything, then there is nothing more to be said."

"There is much more to be said. You made believe that you spent your evenings at the club. I followed you to-night."

"You followed me!"

"I followed you to the tenement-

house, and saw you holding the child in your arms, the child for whom you bought the candy — if it was not for the mother."

"The mother! — the candy! — why, Maria" —

"Mr. Shaw, I didn't know until now that I had married an echo. I didn't know," added the woman, wearily, "*what* I had married."

"Maria," said Mr. Shaw, recovering himself, "if I'm behaving like an idiotic echo it's because you upset me with your suddenness."

"My suddenness?"

"Now *you* are doing it. Suppose you don't get excited. There's no need for it. I am sorry about this."

Silence.

"I'm very sorry. You've managed to frustrate a little plan of mine. I

meant to give you a surprise, Maria."

"You succeeded!"

"No, I've made a muddle of it—with your assistance. You have spoiled everything. I did n't understand at first what you were driving at; but now I see. You think I have gone wrong in some way. Well, I have n't gone very far this time; but I won't answer for the future. Do you know what is carved on the slab let into the wall over the front door of that tenement-house?"

"I don't want to know."

"But you must know. The inscription on that stone cost me two shillings a letter, and the words are—
THE MARIA HOME."

Mrs. Shaw gave a start in her turn.

"It's a model tenement-house for

poor people, and the plan and purpose of it are among the few things in my life that I'm not ashamed of. I'd an idea of trying to do a little good before I died. There's no money in the thing; but I wanted you to own it, and I gave your name to it, and I intended to give you the deed of the property to-morrow morning for your wedding-anniversary present."

"Augustus . . ."

"I did n't mean you to suspect a thing about it until then. I can't conceive how you came to. Maybe my staying out so late last night set your wits to work. It was after eleven, was n't it? I had a hundred and one small odds and ends to finish up. I stayed longer than I ought to have done; but they make a great deal of me down there, the children and all,

and I have to step in and say a word to each of the tenants, or there'd be trouble. To-night I paid my wind-up visit as proprietor to The Maria Home. I did n't dream that the new proprietor was around."

Mrs. Shaw made a movement as if to speak, but restrained herself, and stood silent, with one hand on the back of the chair from which she had risen.

"Since I got out of business," continued Mr. Shaw, "nothing has interested me like the fixing up of that tenement-house. I have been two months doing it. I've spent whole days watching the workmen. I was in such a hurry to get the place in running order that I hired the carpenters and painters to do inside work evenings. The nights I went

there to superintend the job I made believe I was at the club. I had to do it, or show my hand. You will have to tell me how you discovered that I was n't at the club. And you thought I had gone dead wrong?"

"We thought something had gone wrong, Augustus. What else could we think when we found out that you were deceiving us?"

"And you actually followed me, both of you?"

"Yes, Augustus," faltered Mrs. Shaw — "Elizabeth and I."

"Perhaps you were too old not to know any better; but I am ashamed of Elizabeth."

"Don't, Augustus! don't laugh at me, and don't blame Elizabeth. She begged me to speak to you the moment I suspected — I hardly know

what. I did n't mind a word she said; and, oh, I am so sorry! Elizabeth was the only one that had a grain of reason. But even she, when we stood in that horrid street and saw you — saw you" — and the figures on that yellow window-shade flashed before Mrs. Shaw's vision.

"And you were jealous of me, were you?"

Mrs. Shaw nodded her head, but nodded it only slightly, not wanting to spill any tears.

"Madly jealous, Maria? You may as well say it."

"Yes — madly."

"Maria, what was the name of that fellow in the play the other night — that colored fellow that did n't have sense enough for an end-man in a negro-minstrel show?"

"Othello," said Mrs. Shaw with a half-hysterical laugh.

"Well, my dear, if I were to write a play I should call it *Mrs. Othello*."

"You are not *very* angry with me?"

"No, I am not angry at all. I'm a little mortified, I confess, and a good deal amused. Perhaps on my side I made a mistake in trying to keep anything away from you. It was n't a very wise piece of business. A man should n't hide things from his wife, nor she from him. If I ever *do* go wrong, Maria, I shall let you know in advance; I'll drop you a telegram. Where's Elizabeth? She has n't gone to bed yet, for I saw a light in her room as I came along. I wish you'd run upstairs and tell her that she has n't kissed anybody good-night."

But Mrs. Shaw, who had meanwhile sunk into her chair, rested one arm on the edge of the table, and laid her cheek on the arm, and did not move.

V

LATE that night, just as Elizabeth had drifted into a doze through sheer weariness of waiting, she was dimly conscious of some one standing outside her bedroom door. Faint as was the impression, it awakened her, and she distinctly caught the rustle of skirts and the light sound of receding footfalls. It was her mother, who had come to tell her what had taken place. Elizabeth hurriedly opened the door, and looked out into the black hallway; but by this time Mrs. Shaw had gained her own apartment, and the girl did not dare follow her.

The next morning as she de-

scended the stairs Elizabeth's eyes were troubled and her face was nearly colorless; but at the threshold of the breakfast-room, where she had paused, the blood suddenly came into the pale cheeks and the anxious expression vanished. She stood brightening, with a motionless hand on the half-turned knob. Her father and mother were chatting gayly over the breakfast! Then Elizabeth flung back the door, and entered the room with a joyous laugh, not waiting for any explanation to lighten her heart.

The three lingered long at table that morning, and when the happy conference came to an end, Elizabeth could hardly wait for the hour appointed for Dennis to drive them together to the shabby street with its mysterious house, which had been so

wrapped in blackness overnight and now stood in a flood of sunshine.

"Why it's like a story in a magazine!" cried Elizabeth. "A silhouette of papa, with that dear tuft of hair standing up straight against the window-shade, would make a delightful illustration."

"Elizabeth!" remonstrated Mrs. Shaw.

"It did n't seem so diverting last night, mother, but now, as I think of it" — and the girl broke into a laugh, in which her father joined; but Mrs. Shaw, like a dutiful wife, was never inclined to regard Augustus in a humorous light.

Thus the oddly composed cloud which had gathered over the roof of The Maria Home floated away. But it was the precursor of other clouds

which, though less portentous, were not so easily dissipated. It seems an unfair dispensation of destiny that an amiable, middle-aged gentleman engaged in a work of benevolence should have as many tribulations befall him as if he had been pursuing evil courses.

Mr. Shaw's idea of establishing a model tenement-house sprang from a purely philanthropic impulse. As vice-president of the benevolent society, referred to elsewhere, he had come to an intimate knowledge of how the poor were housed in a great city. His official work on committees had opened up to him vistas of wretchedness until then not dreamed of. The miserable folk of the slums, so degraded as to be unaware of their own misery, moved his pity; but this

was not the class that interested him the most deeply. It was the class one or two removes above — the men and women who would like to live cleanly lives in cleanly homes, but whose poverty condemned them to haunts of filth and darkness. Sorrow's crown of sorrow is not, as the poet says, the remembering of happier things, but the bitter consciousness of never having known them.

In vast congeries of human beings light and air, which seem the common inheritance of man, have their price, like coal and bread, and the very poor may purchase them but sparingly. To effect a radical change in this matter, or indeed, in any appreciable degree to alter the general condition of the great masses, struck Mr. Shaw as a task for dreamers.

One might nibble at the edge of such an endeavor, but that was all. Still one might nibble, and turning the problem over in his mind he resolved that somewhere in the great, distracted city there should be a little nook where light and air, for a few at least, could be had at panic prices.

His plan was to construct a moderate-sized apartment house, very plain in its inside and outside finish, but embracing every device of ventilation and sanitary plumbing that money could compass. There should be a bath-room to each suite, and an elevator, and separate front-door bells, and conveniences in the way of closets hitherto unthought of in the economy of tenement houses. The apartments were to be let to worthy and respectable families at a rental

just sufficient to keep the premises in repair. The interest on the investment and the taxes on the property were to be items in Mr. Shaw's personal contribution ; and he would call the tenement The Maria Home, in order that a good woman's name might bring good luck to it. Mr. Shaw had always signalized the anniversary of their marriage by a gift to his wife. This year it should be something better than a jewel from Tiffany's.

A brief search resulted in his finding a building adapted to his purpose, and he at once set to work on the necessary renovations. Mr. Shaw did not overstate the case when he told his wife that nothing had so absorbed him since he retired from business ; it was the one thing that had absorbed

him. This tenement house was his yacht, his race-horse, his private salmon-stream. The money which other men spent on pleasures that had no attraction for him, he spent on this.

When The Maria Home was ready for occupants, Mr. Shaw issued a series of judiciously worded advertisements in daily journals read by working people, stating at what hour applications for rooms could be made on the premises. He set aside two nights in the week on which to confer with his prospective tenants, who were necessarily not at liberty during the day. The most explicit and unquestionable references were required of them, for Mr. Shaw had no intention that undeserving persons should reap the benefits appertaining to inmates of The Maria Home. One of these benefits

was in connection with the grocery store already established in the basement. The proprietor was a German named Swartz, a feature of whose contract was to furnish the tenants with certain necessities, like flour, tea, and sugar, at a trifle above actual cost, Mr. Shaw making up the natural deficit thus incurred by a rebate in Swartz's rent.

The five or six suites constituting The Maria Home were not long in the market. Five families and two detached elderly females were installed before the end of a week.

The little world which Mr. Shaw had set agoing was a mixed and busy little world, the inhabitants of which were not so numerous as their occupations. To begin at the top, architecturally speaking, Mrs. Malone, in the

attic, was charwoman, sick-nurse, and plain sempstress. Mrs. Ward, on the same floor, took in fine sewing, but depended chiefly on a brother in Chicago. Of the two Downey girls, the floor beneath, one was under-saleswoman in a small millinery department shop on Sixth Avenue, and the other worked in a paper-box manufactory across town ; Downey, the father, did something in the old-iron and junk-bottle line. The employment of Mr. Morrison, directly over Mr. Swartz, was multifarious, and not easily to be defined — an employment that exacted eccentric hours ; the son was porter in a Broadway dry-goods house, and the daughter assisted her mother. A machinist, a sign-painter, and a tailor, with their respective fledglings, completed the census.

There was an element of pathos in the intense interest which Mr. Shaw took in his scheme. He could not keep himself away from the place, and no longer having any valid reason for frequent visits, improvised important business interviews with Mr. Swartz. Presently Mr. Shaw's appearance came to be hailed with an enthusiasm that spread from Germany in the basement to Ireland in the sky-parlor. "It's proud I am to see his Honor," Mrs. Malone would cry from the top of the staircase; and the children would gather about him on the landings, divining a friend, with the curious instinct children have. It was rarely that a paper of bonbons did not lie nestled in Mr. Shaw's coat pocket, where such delicacies were supposed to generate spontaneously.

This was the situation, and The Maria Home had been running nearly a month, the night Mrs. Shaw and Elizabeth made their discovery.

At the breakfast table the following morning Mr. Shaw told the story which I have given only in outline. He had not finished before the two women fell to making a thousand sympathetic plans. Mrs. Shaw would have a supervisory eye on the housekeeping, and a Christmas tree for the children, with some useful gift pendent from every twig, instantly took root and grew six feet high in Elizabeth's determination. Among her own acquaintances Mrs. Shaw would solicit work for the sewing-women. There was to be no measure to her interest in everything to do with the Home. Unconsciously to herself, perhaps, Mrs.

Shaw was subtly atoning for the injustice she had done her husband.

With the passing of the title the duty of managing the property did not pass from Mr. Shaw. The duty had none of the disagreeable features of perfunctory matters. It would be mere recreation to keep the building in repair, collect the rent, and look after the general welfare of the tenants. The very limited amount they were called upon to expend for shelter would of course enable them to lay by something. He purposed later to advise them how to place their savings to the best advantage. No smallest thing escaped him. He took deep pride in the neat outside appearance of the house, setting an example to the squalid environments. The little chrome-yellow patch of canary-bird,

in a cage hung at the entrance to the grocery-store, seemed to him to light up the whole street; and he would have condoned many a shortcoming on the part of the third-floor tenants — the Downeys — because they kept a box of mignonette on one of the window-ledges. The chiropodist's tin sign, next door, with its ghastly parody of a foot which appeared to be trying to stamp out whatever spark of respectability lingered in the neighborhood, was a dreadful eyesore to Mr. Shaw.

“I should just like to extract that corn-doctor!” was his reflection.

VI

UP to this time Mr. Shaw's pleasure in The Maria Home had been unalloyed, leaving out Mrs. Shaw's tragic moment. The monthly rents were to be collected in advance, and those for May had been paid. But on the 1st of June, when the second month's rent fell due, affairs were not quite satisfactory. Mrs. Malone was full of explosive explanations and promises, and Mrs. Ward frankly admitted her inability to pay at present. She was a fragile little woman, and had come there ill. Mr. Shaw had taken her in because of her gentle manners and the something sad about her. The Downeys could

produce two thirds of the required sum, and no more. Two other families begged an extension until the following Saturday. Mr. Morrison, a silent man with heavy brows, and Mr. Swartz the grocer, were the only tenants who paid in full and promptly.

Meanwhile the Shaws had migrated to Long Branch — reluctantly on the part of Elizabeth and her mother, who regretted this interruption of their personal labors. Several commissions had been obtained for the needle-women, and further orders were promised; and Elizabeth was in the midst of forming the nucleus of a small library for the inmates of the tenement. But these and other matters had to be left in abeyance.

The necessity of going to the city now and then to attend to the busi-

ness of the Home was an agreeable break in the dull routine of Mr. Shaw's seashore life. The 1st of July brought him to town for a day. He had come with the hope of finding an improvement in the financial world. Mrs. Ward, who had heard from her brother, made up for the previous month; she could not, however, discharge the current term. In the case of Mrs. Malone history repeated itself. The rest of the lodgers, with the exception of the sign-painter, met their indebtedness. This was not wholly disheartening. But on the following month the Morrisons and the Swartzes were the only ones not behindhand.

Mr. Shaw's patience under these unlooked-for set-backs was not exhausted. The New England Method-

ism of his youth had not hardened a very soft spot in his heart for all sorts of unfortunates, whether culpable or not. "Every man has n't had my chances," he would say. His tolerance and point of view were expressed in Newton's comment on an outcast that once passed him on the street: "Excepting for God's grace, there goes John Newton."

Mr. Shaw, however, was disappointed and perplexed, and his perplexity increased as time went on. Mrs. Ward presently fell into a chronic state of not having heard from her brother in Chicago; but she was a sick woman, and could not be put out on the sidewalk. Of Mrs. Malone, whose general suavity veiled a temperament not to be trifled with, Mr. Shaw was candidly afraid; and

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the September forenoon when he tapped at her door and found that charming person absent for the day, he was not half sorry. On this same occasion the Downeys might as well have been in the moon as in The Maria Home, so far as any rent was concerned. They were simply luckless, inoffensive persons, whose improvidence would have run them ashore had they possessed the wealth of the Astors. They would willingly pay if they could. The family on the second floor had just lost a child, and the bread-winner of another little flock, the machinist, was sympathetically off his job in consequence of a strike on the part of the paper-makers. And so on to the end of the chapter.

How other owners of tenement

property would act in such emergencies Mr. Shaw did not know; but he had a clear perception of his own helplessness. To proceed to extreme measures was repugnant to him. To let things go on as they were going meant the collapse of his scheme.

Mr. Shaw began to feel that he was not of the stuff out of which energetic and successful landlords are made. He was not, and the inmates of The Maria Home were aware of it. They belonged to a class which, however lacking in other gifts, does not lack the gift of character-reading. Mrs. Malone, for illustration, had not required four weeks, or four minutes, to discover that she need not pay her rent regularly. She settled that point the instant she laid eyes on him. "It's a soft-natured man he is

entirely," was her rapid diagnosis; "he looks like a born tyrant, he does, but he's no sand."

We shall not follow Mr. Shaw in his various troubles and embarrassments growing out of the financial problem. It was October, and the family was again in town. At the end of this month wholly new complications had arisen. Mrs. Malone and the Downeys were quarreling. The Downeys, having a harmonium, could not stand her assumptions of social superiority. One day happening on the ground at the crisis, Mr. Shaw overheard this fragment of dialogue:

"I've a cousin in the insurance," Mrs. Malone was saying, haughtily, "a cousin once removed."

"Yes," retorted Delia, the younger Downey girl, "the police removed

him!" — and Mr. Shaw with a heavy sigh hastened from the field of conflict. Whenever Mrs. Malone and any of the Downeys now met on the staircase there was sure to be a lively interchange of incivilities. This was annoying, and still more annoying was a case of musical intoxication that broke out on the third floor rear. The man kept everybody awake all night — singing national anthems and informing the neighborhood that Columbia was "the germ of the ocean."

"Here am I," reflected Mr. Shaw, "trying to ease a bit the burdens of these people, and there's hardly one of them will lend a hand. It's difficult to help the poor, but it is the poor that often make it difficult. They're a blessed study. I don't see but they have just as good a time as anybody."

Bickerings upstairs and sporadic outbreaks of conviviality downstairs were greatly distressing Mr. Shaw, when a real disaster befell The Maria Home. Mr. Morrison, the silent and punctual Mr. Morrison, was arrested for complicity in a bank robbery over in Newark, and taken handcuffed from the house by a couple of detectives. A group of street arabs sent up a derisive cheer as the convoy descended the steps, and little Jimmy Dowd, the bootblack with one suspender, gave vent to his ecstatic delight by standing on his head on the curbstone. The Maria Home figured in the morning papers, and Mr. Shaw passed a sleepless night. A reporter had wanted to interview him! The unfortunate affair could not be kept from Mrs. Shaw and Elizabeth,

as other disagreeable occurrences had been. It was too flagrant. While reading the police report, that morning, the young girl felt a heavy blight creeping over her Christmas tree.

"Fancy that quiet Mr. Morrison being a bank robber!" cried Elizabeth, not untouched by the lurid romance of it. "He must have broken into a great many banks, papa."

"I don't doubt it, my dear. That enabled him to pay his rent punctually, so perhaps we ought n't to complain. I almost wish Miss Delia Downey would blow up a safe or two," added Mr. Shaw, with bitter cheerfulness. "The firm of Maria and Company will go into insolvency if she does n't."

"Why, papa, I thought everything in that way was going just lovely."

"It looks it—at a distance. Looked at close to, everything is going to the dogs as fast as it can ;" and Mr. Shaw vaguely passed one hand over what Elizabeth called his scalp-lock—a gesture always indicative of extreme discouragement.

It had become plain to Mr. Shaw that his only course was to put the Home into the hands of some agent who could run it properly. He himself had signally failed. In spite of all his precautions as to references, he had filled the house with a set of irresponsible and reckless persons who, in addition to disgracing the place, paid little or nothing for the privilege. He was meditating the step when he was forced to immediate action by the illness of Mrs. Shaw, who had been ordered to spend the coming winter

in a warm climate as the sole remedy. The Shaws had never been abroad, and the south of France was suggested.

Mr. Shaw looked about for some one competent to take charge of The Maria Home, and found him close at hand in the person of Mr. Swartz, the shrewd and not unkindly German grocer, who, belonging to the class with which he had to deal, would know how to manage them. In fact, the man had already been tacitly accepted by Mr. Shaw as a sort of agent. It was Mr. Swartz who secured occupants for the suite vacated by the Morrisons. Mr. Shaw instructed him to use the tenants with every consideration and kindness, but not to allow any one to remain who had fallen two months in arrears, unless it happened to be Mrs. Ward. Mr. Swartz promised to

follow all instructions to the letter, and assured Mr. Shaw that he would have no non-paying tenants when he got back.

"Der rent is sheap, and dose peoples should pay on der top of der nail, vas n't it?" said Mr. Swartz, plunging recklessly into an alien idiom.

"Yes, Swartz, they should pay on the nail, as you say; but I'm afraid that they won't contrive to do it always. You must n't press them too hard. Give them a little time. Good-by, Swartz."

"Gott in himmel!" said Mr. Swartz, looking after Mr. Shaw as he went down the street; "vot a man! vot a lan'lordt!"

Mr. Shaw drew a deep breath of relief that bleak December morning as he stepped into the carriage that

was to take him and Mrs. Shaw and Elizabeth to the steamer. Of their winter on the Continent this record makes no note.

The Shaws returned to New York early in the following spring. They reached West Fifteenth Street in the forenoon, and as soon as lunch was over Mr. Shaw set forth for The Maria Home, touching which he had had a sudden relapse of anxiety; for, from the moment Sandy Hook melted out of sight on the horizon until the moment when it came mistily into view again, he had troubled himself little about the tenement house. Though his agent's reports had at first been regular, if not always lucid — Swartz was the master of a phenomenal English prose style — Mr. Shaw had scarcely glanced at them. But now

he remembered that it was more than two months since Mr. Swartz had given any signs of life, and the reflection brought a swift sense of uneasiness.

When Mr. Shaw found himself in front of The Maria Home he stood transfixed with amazement. The house was changed almost beyond recognition, and apparently unoccupied. There was not a window blind remaining above the first story, the door of the grocery in the basement had been boarded up, and theatre posters decorated the dead spaces of the lower brickwork. What had happened? What had become of Swartz? What had become of everybody?

In such neighborhoods the corner drugstore is the vital centre of information. There was one on the next

block, and thither Mr. Shaw hurried. A communicative clerk was engaged at the moment in coating a batch of aromatic pills by rolling them in fine powder scattered on a glass slab. Did he know anything about the vacant tenement house down the street? Well, yes, he knew all there was to know. About a week ago the police turned out the whole precious menagerie, neck and heels. The keys were at the precinct station. The building belonged to a man named Shaw—a philanthropic freak. The clerk himself had never seen him. He was supposed to be abroad somewhere. The place had been left in charge of a Dutchman called Swartz, who fired all the old tenants because they did n't pay down, and replaced them with a tough set. There were junketings

and rows every night, and the patrolman on that beat had a sweet time of it. Swartz took to drink, and was as bad as any of them. The street was n't what might be called a Sunday-go-to-meeting street, but the neighbors could n't stand the racket, and lodged complaints. Then the circus was closed. Two days before the raid Swartz had disappeared, and the shebeen was running itself. Could n't say what had become of Swartz ; he drank up his grocery-store ; did n't leave anything but a bushel of potatoes and a canary-bird. Did hear that he'd gone back to Germany. The police were waiting for the owner to put in an appearance. They had n't bothered themselves much over the matter ; it had rather amused them ; but then "Shaw's Folly" had always amused the neighborhood.

Shaw's Folly

"Ah! They call the tenement 'Shaw's Folly,' do they?" and Mr. Shaw, paying no heed to the clerk's answer, muttered, "I should n't wonder if it was!"

In listening to the drug-clerk's off-hand discourse Mr. Shaw had run through a whole gamut of emotions. The "philanthropic freak" had brought a faint smile to his lips, but the characterization of The Maria Home as a "shebeen" made him wince. He was by turns pained, mortified, and indignant. Was it not a high-handed proceeding on the part of the authorities to evict his tenants and shut up the house? Then he had to admit that the circumstances justified the step. What else could the police have done? Thanking the clerk for his obliging information, Mr.

W. H. U.

Shaw walked thoughtfully down the street.

At the police station Mr. Shaw obtained the keys after some delay, and retraced his steps to The Maria Home. The interior of the house was in keeping with the dilapidated outside. The mystery of the missing window blinds was explained by the absence of the balusters and the baluster-rails of all the staircases. They had probably been used for firewood during the winter. In some places even the mop-boards were stripped off. Everywhere were dust, rubbish, and confusion. The musty air of the silent rooms, whence the huddled life had so lately departed, seemed palpitant with ghosts. Mr. Shaw looked round him with a rueful smile.

"Swartz has kept his word. He told me I should n't have any non-paying tenants when I got back!"

Mr. Shaw did not pursue his investigations beyond the second floor. He had seen all he cared to see, and learned all he cared to know. Swartz had fled, with or without the two months' rental; it did n't matter. The happy refuge, builded for a few of the unhappy, had been destroyed by the hands of those it had meant to shelter. It is seldom that a man has his wrecked dream presented to him in so tangible a form.

"If ever I try to start another tenement house on a philanthropic basis," said Mr. Shaw to himself, "may I be — caught doing it and stopped, by Maria or somebody! 'Shaw's Folly' — well, yes, that describes it. Yet

some man will do this thing some day, and make it pay. The idea was there all right, though I haven't seemed to know how to work it out. Perhaps there was too much charity in my plan — the kind of charity that gives birth to paupers."

Mr. Shaw locked the front door and slowly descended the stone steps, which were littered with handbills and dried scraps of orange peel. Reaching the sidewalk, he lingered an instant, glanced up at the looming red-brick façade, and then turned his back on The Maria Home.

It was a failure, but it was one of those failures in which lie the seeds of success. A dim and scarcely recognized presentiment of this was Mr. Shaw's sole consolation.

That same afternoon old Mr. Elijah

Shaw dropped down from Vermont as if on purpose to say: "I told you so! I knew that Augustus would tumble into some sort of foolishness sooner or later. There's an abandoned farm up in New Hampshire waiting for Augustus. What's the use!"

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AN UNTOLD STORY

AN UNTOLD STORY

THE night was heavy with the scents of flowers distilled in the dampness ; a band was playing under a pavilion on the further side of the garden ; among the foliage hung hundreds of colored lights. The moon had risen, and in open spaces the overleaning sprays and branches were stamped in black on the asphalt walks, which, diverging right and left, led to fountains and cafés and secluded nooks. Here, after the heat of the day, the beauty and fashion of Budapest assemble for an hour or two to lounge, and eat ices, and get a breath of cool air. In the gay season, nearly every nation on

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earth contributes a costume or a singularity to the picturesque throng.

Within a dozen paces of the little iron table where I was seated, the Danube swept by almost flush with the stone coping. At this point the current is very strong, running at a speed of not less than five or six miles an hour. The spring floods, fed by the snows and rains of the Blocksberg, must, at times, I thought, test the strength of the buttresses of the airy bridges whose far-stretched threads of light were now repeating themselves in the water.

A sultry summer night, with scarcely wind enough to stir a leaf on the topmost bough, and only now and then a hasty breath, like a sigh, from the river. The crowds of promenaders were gathered about the music-stand, and I was

virtually alone as I sat listening to the Strauss waltz and repeopling the height of the opposite shore with the hordes of turbaned Turks who stormed and took the place in 1526. Etched against the sky was a crumbling citadel — no longer solicitous of the straggling gray town that had crept up to it for protection; a sentinel fallen asleep ages and ages ago. From time to time a small boat glided across the broad strip of moonlight lying on the water, and vanished.

Suddenly a figure, the slender figure of a girl, rushed past me, so closely that I felt the wind of the flying drapery. An instant afterward she had thrown herself into the Danube. A dark shape, which the velocity of the current pressed against the masonry, was carried twenty or thirty yards

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down the stream almost before I could spring to my feet. As I did so, a policeman, who seemed to rise out of the ground in the shadow of an acacia tree, leaned over the low curbing and clutched at the outspread skirt, which had not yet lost its buoyancy. A moment later two other guardians reached the spot, and the girl was lifted from the river, insensible, and lay glittering on the greensward.

She was not more than eighteen or nineteen, a very beautiful girl, with the full, delicate lines which distinguish the Slav women of even the peasant class. Her black hair hung in strands about the throat and face, the pallor of which was further intensified by the deep fringe of her eyelashes. On one half-bared shoulder, where it had probably grazed the brickwork, was a

bruise. She wore a robe of some soft white material, plainly made, but in the fashion of the hour. A narrow scarlet ribbon, the bow of which had slipped under the ear, encircled her neck ; a ring set with a single stone sparkled on the forefinger of the right hand. There were no other attempts at personal adornment. The simplicity of the girl's dress, with its certain negative evidences of refinement, left her grade in life indeterminate. She might have been a lady's maid — or a duchess. Beauty knows no distinction.

The color had gone from the lips. They were slightly parted, as though she were smiling in her trance — if it was a trance. Could it be death ? That seemed hardly probable under the circumstances ; though so complex and delicate is the mechanism of the

heart that a lighter shock than she had sustained may stop it. She had floated face downward, and there was some delay in lifting the body from the water; but not three minutes had elapsed between the desperate act and the rescue.

By this time a number of persons had collected, and there were many gesticulations and much chattering in French, Italian, and Hungarian, the import of which I could not catch, beyond an inference that the girl had been identified by one of the bystanders — a nondescript elderly person, with glasses, who seemed in no especial manner afflicted by what had occurred, but was appreciative of his own accidental importance. Subsequently I received the impression that the man found himself mistaken, and had relapsed into nobody again.

The lookers-on increased momentarily, drawn to the spot by some inscrutable instinct of sight-seeing. One of the undreamed-of penalties of the suicide is to become spectacular.

At the approach of a newcomer, a physician, the crowd respectfully drew aside, making place for him. His examination was of necessity superficial and preliminary. When it was ended he rose from his knee, and without speaking spread a handkerchief over the face, until then uncovered. The thin tissue adhered to the damp features and straightway moulded itself into a startling mask. The doctor briefly interrogated the three guards, made a few memoranda on his tablets, and departed. A little distance off — their curiosity partly overcoming their fear — stood a group of children in an

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attitude of hesitation, ready for instant flight, like a flock of timid sparrows.

The physician's departure was the signal for renewed chattering and gesticulation, in which a helmeted sergent de ville now joined, taking rapid notes, and occasionally pausing to wave the book over his head—an energetic sergent de ville. Then an interval of poignant silence ensued. Everybody waited. Presently four men appeared with a litter, and the girl was laid upon it, looking like a marble statue carved on some mediæval tomb, and was so borne away.

The cortège had hardly disappeared down the main avenue when a gentleman, evidently a person of consequence, came hurriedly from an opposite direction, a footman in livery following closely at his heels. On

learning which path the bearers had taken the pair hastened after them.

The crowd dispersed as quickly as it had gathered, and I went back to my seat under the trees. The river flowed on in the moonlight ; strains of music from the orchestra, and sounds of happy voices, softened by distance, drifted through the shrubbery. The cafés were emptying, and richly decked women and men in evening dress sauntered idly past. Nothing was changed in the *mise-en-scène* of half an hour before ; all the fairy-like stage-properties were the same. The effacement of the tragedy was so complete that the swift, dark interlude had scarcely left a sense of its incongruity. It was like a dream that one recalls confusedly on awaking. Did I imagine this thing, a while ago, as I sat

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drowsing in my chair with the untasted ice beside me? One tangible detail remained — the trampled green-sward, yonder, where the body had lain, and the parapet splashed with water.

The next morning I searched the papers, such at least as were printed in French, for some item touching the occurrence, but found none. How came it that the taste of life so soon turned bitter on those young lips? Was it some lover who scorned her, or one from whose love she fled? To the heart of what man, walking the thronged streets of the city or dwelling alone in some adjacent suburb, did this piteous death send an intended pang? There was a kind of relief in knowing nothing more than I had witnessed. Perhaps the vague drama

that pieced itself loosely together in my imagination was better than the reality would have been. A gloss of grim fact might have spoiled the finer text. As it was, the pathos and the mystery of it all haunted me, and followed me across the sea.

In the months that succeeded, the incident gradually faded out of my mind, and probably would never have detached itself from the blur of half-forgotten things if chance had not again brought me to the Hungarian capital. As the Orient Express was nearing Budapest the recollection of the girl who threw herself into the river two years before came abruptly into my thought, and insisted on staying there. The reminiscence was natural enough, time and place con-

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sidered; but the obstinacy of it irritated me a little.

After dinner, that evening, I joined the promenaders in the garden. The small iron table, with its green-painted chair under the linden, was in the same place, and had quite the air of having kept itself unoccupied for me all this while. The river once more turned itself into silver and lapis-lazuli as I looked. The military band was playing the old interminable waltz, and the same waiter took my order for an ice—it might have been the untasted ice of two years ago, re-frozen. The thing that had happened seemed weirdly on the point of happening over again. Sitting there I half expected a slender girlish figure to rush past me. At intervals the remembered face glim-

mered among the shadows under the acacia trees—the face like a white rose drenched with rain.

My halt at Budapest was of the briefest—a break in a long eastward journey, to be resumed the following afternoon.

As I was driving to the station, the next day, a block in the crowded street brought my conveyance to a stand. Facing me on my right, and some eight or ten yards distant, was a landau wedged in a mass of carriages. The gold braid of the coachman and footman first caught my eye; then I glanced at the occupants of the carriage, a lady and a gentleman—and on them my gaze rested spell-bound. It was the girl I had helped to drag from the river! The gentleman at her side and the footman on

the box were the two men who had hurried into the garden that night just after the removal of the body. Excepting for them I might have discredited my eyes. I could not be mistaken in all three.

It was she — pale, as I remember her, but now with an aureole of distinction which she had not seemed to wear in her forlorn state. I had seen only her Slavonic beauty. She was simply robed, as then, but now more richly, with a flash of diamonds at the wrist as she lifted one hand in a sudden imperious gesture to the driver of a vehicle behind her. There was, I fancied, something characteristic and temperamental in that gesture.

I had only a moment for observation. The impeded stream of traffic

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flowed again and the landau swept by, leaving a deepened mystery on my hands.

Here was a more complex drama than I had sketched in my imagination two years previously. Then I had been content with the commonplace plot of some poor girl deserted by her lover. But now? The play was not so simple as that. It involved subtler motive and action, and a different setting. There were new elements in the tragedy, and sharper contrasts to be considered.

These two persons were evidently persons of rank. On the panels of the landau was an heraldic blazon — a clue, if it had been possible for me to follow it. Who were they? Father and daughter, or husband and wife, or mistress and lover? I was

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not to know. I had caught a glimpse of one lurid page in the book of those two lives; then the volume had been closed, and, so far as I was concerned, sealed forever. ✓

That shut book! It stands darkling on a shelf by itself in my library, unread, and never to be opened. In certain frequent moods I find myself tantalized beyond reason by its conjectural romance. I have read many a famous novel which has not had for me one half the charm that lies in that untold story.

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**THE CASE OF THOMAS
PHIPPS**

THE CASE OF THOMAS PHIPPS

I

WHEN Thomas Phipps had reached what are called the years of discretion it was plainly apparent to the naked eye that discretion had not arrived with the years. This was a matter of no surprise to those familiar with his childhood, for an unworldly lack of common-sense had distinguished him from the cradle. At the age of six he began attendance at the little red-brick schoolhouse on the Hampton turnpike, where he grew into a long, lank youth, tranquilly accepting the im-

positions of his classmates and the severities of a series of masters. The younger boys got his marbles away from him, and the elder boys assimilated the greater portion of his lunch at recess. If he exchanged jack-knives, he generally found himself the final possessor of the one with a broken blade or some other abnormal defect. He was a distressing mixture of innocence, conscientiousness, and obstinacy. There were unexpected moments when it was impossible to do anything at all with him. His amiability never deserted him in these intervals; but somehow wrapped up in his guileless, half-infantile smile was the intimation of a will of iron. Whenever this particular look came into Thomas Phipps's face, the young brigands of the red schoolhouse

called a halt to their persecutions. If he chanced, in the midst of that engaging smile, to remark, "I don't think you'd better fool with that oriole's nest in the eld elm down by the pond," the oriole's nest escaped pillage for the time being. Unlike the average country lad, he was very gentle with all gentle creatures, having a sort of esoteric kinship with birds, squirrels, and mud-turtles.

The setting forth of these traits of his childhood renders a later description of him unnecessary; for the boy was father to the man.

When Thomas Phipps's schooldays were over, his uncle, Daniel Whipple, who had adopted him in infancy, set him to work on the farm. The estate, which was called Westside, lay on the outskirts of Hampton, and had been in

the family since 1760. Deacon Whipple was a widower, with two daughters somewhat younger than Thomas, whose lines were considered to have fallen in pleasant places. He would probably inherit Westside, or a portion of it, and certainly marry one of the girls — Mary, of course; Martha Jane squinted. The logical neighborhood had long ago arranged the programme.

Daniel Whipple was suspected of being very wealthy, and known to be eccentric. Though not precisely an ill-natured person, he was a man of strong antipathies, and not popular — especially not popular with his four cousins living in the town. The adoption of Thomas Phipps by the deacon had not been approved at the time by the Fishleys, and as years wore on,

establishing closer relations between uncle and nephew, the disapproval was not modified. When young Phipps was put into training evidently intended to fit him for the ultimate proprietorship of Westside, the spectacle was too painful for the Fishleys. An indirect remonstrance lighted the ready pyre of Deacon Whipple's wrath, and the Fishleys, so to speak, perished in the flames. They were brothers.

Thomas Phipps took to farm-work with seeming relish, and developed cleverness on one or two unsuspected lines. He showed considerable knack at carpentering, and did a job of painting on the old stables so skillfully that the over-busy local painter was not missed. But Thomas Phipps's interest in agricultural pursuits was only seeming. He hated the business with

great cheerfulness, and his cheerfulness deceived the uncle. Perhaps Daniel Whipple received the largest surprise of his life on the morning of the day when Thomas Phipps attained his majority. He walked into the barn where the deacon was inspecting a very recent heifer, and said quietly :

“Uncle Dan’el, I don’t think I like farming.”

“Don’t like what?”

“Farming. I intend to give it up.”

“Give it up!” cried the deacon, letting go his hold on the heifer’s left hind leg with such suddenness as to cause the little stranger to topple over in the straw. “Are you crazy, Thomas? What are you driving at?”

“I never meant to be a farmer. I mean to be a painter.”

The deacon had not risen from his half-kneeling posture. He now stood up.

"You want to be one of those long-haired artist-fellows that come mooning about here summer-times?"

"No," said Thomas Phipps, with a laugh — a laugh which in another man would have rung out, but in him was perfectly noiseless. "I propose to be a painter on a larger scale — a house-painter."

"You are not in earnest — you fool!"

"In dead earnest, Uncle Dan'el."

"Then you'd better put a cold bandage on your head, and go to bed."

The conversation which ensued that morning — good-natured and obstinate on the part of the nephew, thunder-

ous and charged with lightning on the part of the uncle — needs no recording. The story is told in Deacon Whipple's concluding sentence :

“ Thomas Phipps, if that 's your last word, I don't ever want to see you inside my house again.”

“ If you should happen to want any outside painting ” — began Thomas, but the old gentleman was swinging across the ten-acre lot on his way to the house.

Thus Thomas Phipps gave up an existence of assured ease and relative luxury in order to become merely a house-painter dependent on a precarious daily wage. It required a Thomas Phipps to do that, at the moment of reaching the years of discretion.

II

THE young man had sufficient means to enable him to set up a small shop, and he set it up in the main street diagonally opposite a sign bearing the legend: "J. Timmins, Painter & Glazier." Before deciding on this step Thomas Phipps had approached Mr. Timmins with an offer of services and additional capital, but Mr. Timmins had declined both, and the result was a new studio over the way.

Thomas Phipps's rather singular move stirred endless gossip in Hampton, and touched some queer sense of humor lying dormant in the place. He had always been a favorite in the town,

and there was a readiness to take sides with him against Deacon Whipple, if the two had quarreled. Whether they had or not, and if they had, on what grounds, remained unexplained. Thomas Phipps kept his own counsel and left the problem to solve itself. He arranged his paint-pots and brushes, and placidly waited for business. Presently odd small jobs began to come in — mostly from customers in debt to Mr. Timmins. The pickings were meagre and not profitable.

About this time, providentially, a feverish real-estate boom broke out in Hampton, and hideous little one-story cottages with slated mansard roofs sprang up everywhere, like mushrooms. The two painters in town were not too many for the emergency. Mr. Timmins had to sink his pride, and

ask occasional collaboration at the hands of his rival, who in other ways came in handsomely for a share of the prosperity, though his fortunes fell below the level of his opportunity.

Thomas Phipps, as a house-painter, would have been a great success if it had not been for Thomas Phipps. He had certain positive ideas touching the proper colors for a special house or barn, and his loose, conscientious candor in attempting to impress these excellent ideas on his patrons lost him more than one desirable commission. When the Hon. James Boodle, who was erecting a very pretentious mansion with a chubby tower, directed Phipps to paint the outside in three colors, the first story brown, the second story yellow, and the third story gray, Mr. Phipps, with characteristic

tact, asked the great statesman if he wanted his house "to look like a zebra." Mr. Timmins laid on the three colors, and said not a word. Phipps never understood how that job came to slip through his fingers.

"At the start Boodle was wild to have me do the work, would n't hear of anybody else putting a brush to it, and then the first thing I knew Timmins had his ladder swung against the north gable, and was painting away for dear life. Boodle does n't seem to know his own mind, what there is of it, for more than two minutes together."

Several months before he left his uncle's bed and board Thomas Phipps had fallen in love with Postmaster Spinney's daughter—a young lady whose worldly possessions included

nothing more tangible than her implicit belief in the goodness and miscellaneous superiority of Thomas Phipps. The sudden change in his circumstances affected neither her faith nor her devotion.

" Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds "

in the once satisfactory annual stipend of the beloved. Miss Ethel Spinney held to her promise, though Postmaster Spinney would have liked to shirk his, given in the days of the suitor's prosperity. Mr. Thomas Phipps, the adopted son and presumably one of the heirs of Deacon Daniel Whipple, and Tom Phipps, the house-painter (when he could get any houses to paint), were two distinct individuals. The second had obliterated the first; but the first might suddenly come

back and obliterate the second. The chances of this happening greatly unsettled Mr. Spinney, who at last gave a reluctant consent to Ethel's marriage. The modest wedding took place in the bride's home, and was unattended by any of the Westside people. Deacon Whipple never recognized Thomas Phipps on the street, and the girls only nodded to him furtively when they met. Of late they had ceased to do that. The alienation was complete.

Whether or not young Phipps's desertion interfered with any matrimonial plan of his uncle was guesswork. The offense need not have been so deep as that in order permanently to anger the deacon. In his dealings with mankind he was not tolerant of even slight opposition, though it was

understood that the two Whipple girls could lead him with a hair. If this were so, they evidently did not exert their influence in making the deacon forgive his nephew. Was that through pique or indifference? Hampton was divided on the question.

The flush times had set Thomas Phipps on his feet in a way. He had bought and furnished a cottage, not much bigger than a bird-cage, in the part of the town to which fashion seemed to be wending her capricious steps. But before fashion reached his door, if she ever seriously intended to reach there, the building mania spent itself. Architectural zebras ceased to propagate in Hampton. Every kind of trade slackened, and Thomas Phipps would soon have acquired the hand of little employment had he not added

carriage and sign-painting to his preferred occupation.

As it was, domestic economy had to sail very close to the wind in Willow Street, the site of the bird-cage. Mrs. Phipps was an ingenious little housewife, and could make a palatable stew out of almost nothing ; but she could not make a stew out of nothing at all, and that was the chief ingredient in prospect. She had the pluck that is hereditary in unspoiled New England country girls ; but now and then she broke down when alone, never in Thomas Phipps's presence. There was always a bright face when he came home from his work or no work. One evening, however, she sounded a desponding note in spite of herself.

"Tom," she said, "sometimes I think that you have n't been quite wise.

You have n't looked out for yourself as sharply as other folks do who are n't really half so clever. If you had stayed up at Westside you'd have been a rich man some day."

"Well," said Thomas Phipps, with an introspective air, "I was n't adapted to farming. I had n't any especial call on Uncle Dan'el's property, and I did n't want to marry Mary or Martha Jane. What I wanted, principally, was to marry Ethel Spinney."

"You did it, Tom."

"And I'm not regretting it a minute," said Thomas Phipps. "Just pin that inside your sun-bonnet."

If Thomas Phipps had spells of depression, he was never caught in the act, at home or abroad. Frequently he could be observed standing in the doorway of his paint-shop

and smiling like a multi-millionaire on the passers in the street. If Deacon Whipple chanced to drive by in his gig, Thomas would make him a friendly and respectful salutation, which was never returned. Then Thomas would indulge in one of his mute laughs.

"I'm going to bow to Uncle Dan'el just as long as there's anything left of both of us. I know I disappointed him, but I don't see why he takes it so hard. With his gray-colored sense of fun, I should think he'd be amused. I had to do what I did, or I wouldn't ever have been happy."

Fortunately, the idea that he was not happy never once occurred to Thomas Phipps. It might have depressed him.

III

ONE morning, about eighteen months after his marriage, Thomas Phipps said to himself: "I begin to believe that true art is n't appreciated in Hampton. There's a lack of inside and outside taste. Some things I can't and won't do. Timmins is the man for this locality. He'd paint a cottage dead black if they told him to. A sky-blue hearse with pink dots would just suit him. Perhaps there'd be a chance for me in a city like Portland or Portsmouth, if I could once find a footing."

The situation had become embarrassing. He was too poor to remain in Hampton, and too poor to get

away. This compromise was possible — Ethel might visit her mother for a week or ten days while he was prospecting elsewhere. Phipps involuntarily made a wry face as the thing suggested itself to him. "I've never been separated from Ethel," he reflected, forgetting that he had been separated from her about nineteen years the day he married her.

Thomas Phipps had just taken down the shutters of the single window that lighted his shop, and was now sitting on an empty turpentine barrel near the open door facing the street. His mood was one of unwonted abstraction, for reverie was not in his line. Suddenly a chaise drew up at the curbstone, a man descended from the vehicle and mounted the three wooden steps leading from

the sidewalk up to the narrow platform in front of the building. Phipps lifted his head and nodded pleasantly, wondering what brought Lawyer Dunn to the shop. As the gentleman was a bachelor, and boarded with the Odells, it was n't a job of painting.

"Mr. Phipps," said Mr. Dunn, speaking hurriedly, "Deacon Whipple has just been found dead in his carriage."

"Why — why, it was n't half an hour ago I saw him drive past!"

"What has happened must have happened as he reached the gate of his own house, or very shortly before. The horse was discovered standing quietly beside the hitching-post."

"Is n't there a mistake? Are you sure it is n't a faint, or something he 'll come out of?"

"Quite sure. It was a heart stroke. He is dead."

Thomas Phipps leaned against the door jamb and remained silent. Mr. Dunn turned to go, then lingered a moment, hesitating, and said: "Perhaps I ought to inform you that the will is to be examined this afternoon."

"This afternoon! Is not that rather quick?"

"It is rather unusual. Mr. Whipple had some unconventional notions, and this is one which we are constrained to respect. About a year ago he gave me written as well as oral commands to have the will opened immediately upon his demise — within three or four hours afterwards, if practicable, and in any event it was to be done previous to the in-

terment. You will naturally desire to be present. I shall send word to the Fishleys."

"Well, I don't know," replied Thomas Phipps slowly. "I don't much care to go up to the house yet awhile. I guess I'll wait for the funeral, unless I can be of any help. Perhaps they'll send for me."

"Of course your attendance at the reading is not obligatory or any way necessary."

"I expect not. But I'd half like to see the disappointment of the Fishleys."

"That is at your option."

As Mr. Dunn stepped into the chaise Thomas Phipps began to put up his shutters.

"I guess I'll let the Fishleys enjoy it by themselves."

That afternoon the will was read to a silent group assembled in the half-darkened sitting-room at West-side, and an hour later every detail of the document was known to the town of Hampton. Nobody had suspected how rich he was—not even the tax assessors. There were several public bequests, which excited only passing comment. As a matter of course Deacon Whipple would remember the Baptist Church and the Infirmary. But the seventh clause of the will caused a sensation. In clause VII. a sum of \$3000 was bequeathed to each of the Fishleys, and the sum of \$1000 to Thomas Phipps. The astonishing feature was the condition attached to these legacies — *i. e.* that none of the five named legatees should attend the testator's funeral

services, either at the house, the church, or the cemetery. In case this condition was not complied with by one or several of the above named legatees, the executors of the will were empowered to carry out the sealed instructions left in the hands of the testator's lawyer, Silas Dunn.

In view of so remarkable a provision the correlative circumstance of Deacon Whipple's death was almost lost sight of. On the post-office steps, at the street corner, by the fire-side, and in Warner's drug-store — a centre of incandescent gossip — nothing was spoken of but the odd combination of generosity and malice embodied in that seventh clause.

"It's the first time I ever heard of folks being hired to stay away from a funeral," observed Mr. Millet, the

sexton of St. John's. He had an uneasy feeling that a slight had been cast upon him professionally.

"I wish somebody'd hire me to stay away from mine," put in the local humorist.

"If you could, I don't know any man in town who would hire you," replied the branch-telegraph operator.

"Mebby some creditor," suggested, a voice on the edge of the crowd.

Postmaster Spinney ventured to express the opinion that the parties interested in section VII. would n't be likely to flock to the obsequies.

"I should smile," said the Hon. James Boodle.

"It's a windfall for Tom Phipps," remarked Selectman Devens; "not much of a one, considering; but a windfall's a windfall."

A broad smile overspread the township of Hampton when it was reported that Thomas Phipps had no intention whatever of conforming to his late uncle's wishes in the matter. The report was instantly credited. It was so like Tom Phipps to kick over his own pail of milk. It had been his chief occupation ever since he was five years old, and dazzling success had crowned his efforts. After blighting all his prospects by quitting West-side, no act of short-sightedness on his part was likely to take Hampton wholly by surprise. Of course he would go to that funeral, with his eyes wide open, and lose what little the old gentleman had designed to leave him. If the world had been populated exclusively by human beings like Tom Phipps, the whole

concern would have been wound up long before the Deluge. Somebody ought to get hold of the idiot, and sit on his head for an hour or two while they were burying the Deacon.

“Such stupidity,” declared Mr. Manners, the preceptor of the Boys’ High School, “could not have been acquired; it must have existed in Mr. Phipps anterior to his birth.”

“It seems to me,” said parson Hackett, “that at times he has the air of acting quite independently of his own volition, impelled, as it were, by some outside occult influence. It’s not a question of free will with him. I think myself it was foreordained that he should attend the deacon’s funeral. He can’t help doing it.”

“Tom Phipps is a forgivin’ angel, that’s what he is,” said Miss Clarissa Simms, the milliner.

"Tom's a good boy," assented young Melcher, who was paying attentions to Miss Clarissa; "but as for a down-right angel, I don't think he's got more 'n his pin-feathers jest yet."

Phipps had said nothing to Ethel on the subject, and she had not ventured to question him. The rumor came to her from outside; but she believed it, and knew herself to be powerless. If he had made up his mind, it was no use talking. Ethel watched him nervously that afternoon and all the next day. Either because he scorned so small a legacy, or because he could n't resist the temptation to do an unwise thing, Tom was going to that funeral. And they were so poor!

Deacon Whipple had died on a Monday, and the services were ap-

pointed for Wednesday. On that morning Thomas Phipps dressed himself in his Sunday suit and carefully knotted a black silk neck-tie, an article which had not hitherto figured as an item in his limited wardrobe. By what piece of Jay-Gouldish financiering this necktie and a pair of sombre gloves were accumulated remains a secret. On the day of his marriage he had not arrayed himself with more pains.

Ethel sat on the side of the bed, mutely watching every movement. When his toilet was completed and he turned towards the door, she slowly rose to her feet.

"Tom, do you really mean to — to" —

"I must, Ethel. If I'm built lopsided I must go as I'm built —

crooked. I've thought the whole miserable business over till my head aches, and I don't see any two ways of acting. Uncle Dan'el had his faults; at times he was a hard man; but he was good to me when I was a boy, and not ten thousand dollars, let alone ten hundred, could keep me from going to his funeral. Uncle Dan'el didn't mean I should have a cent. He knew me down to the ground, and he knew I was n't going to swallow any such bitter pill as he'd put up for me. Self-respect comes high, but I've got to have it. It's about the only thing that's worth what it costs — that and first-class linseed oil."

"You're not like other people, Tom, and perhaps that's why I love you. You seem to do the foolishhest

things, but somehow there's always a kind of right at the bottom of the foolishness, even when it does n't turn out well. At first I thought differently from you about this matter, but now I have n't a word to say. I don't care for that money if you don't. I just want you to be yourself." And as Ethel stood on tiptoe to straighten the black necktie there was only a suspicion of moisture in her eyes, and nothing of reproach.

She did not accompany Phipps to Westside, and was impatiently waiting for him at the street door when he returned home shortly after noon-time.

"Were the Fishleys there?" was Ethel's first question.

"They were n't there in great numbers," replied her husband, smiling ;

"but all the rest of the population was on hand. I never saw such a crowd; it stretched out to the front gate. I'm glad I went."

"Did anybody say anything to you, Tom?"

"Parson Hackett shook hands with me, and Mr. Devens said he expected I'd turn up. Everybody turned up, even Li Fang. You know the old man helped him to start his laundry. It was funny to see the heathen Chinese standing round outside, dressed to kill, like an idol in a waxwork show. Li Fang looked kind of sad. They said he wanted to let off some fire-crackers as the coffin was brought out. He was blowing on a piece of lighted punk when they stopped him."

"Poor Li Fang! Perhaps he was the only sincere mourner in the whole

lot, not counting Mary and Martha Jane, of course."

Nothing short of the fullest particulars would satisfy Ethel, and these Thomas Phipps gave her, suppressing the fact that his presence at the ceremonies had overshadowed the principal actor on the scene. The general interest had riveted itself on the droll spectacle of Thomas Phipps forfeiting his legacy. The young man's incomprehensible conduct was viewed in only one light. As he entered the room and quietly seated himself, his father-in-law leaned over and whispered to a neighbor:

"'Though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him.'"

"Sure," was the low-toned rejoin-

der. "A gold mine would be thrown away on a crank like that."

That evening, after supper, Thomas Phipps broached his plan of going to Portland, or some other wider field, in search of an opening. He would of course be obliged to make the venture alone, Ethel to join him immediately in case of his success. Meanwhile Mrs. Spinney would not object to having her daughter back again for a week. Ethel at once assented to the arrangement. The project admitted of no delay.

"I'll put on my things now, and run over and tell mother," said Ethel.

"I'll go along with you. If they should n't happen to be pleased with the idea" —

"Oh, but they'll be pleased!"

"I'll go along, anyway. I'd like

to try to make your father understand how I feel about Uncle Dan'el. I doubt if I can."

He failed in that — neither of the Spinneys could understand it; but the proposition to have Ethel stay with them during Phipps's absence met their views. Though the young man wore a propitiatory smile, there was something about the thin compressed lips that prevented the Spinneys from fully expressing their minds on the burning subject of the will. They consoled themselves with the thought that no such diplomacy would be needed in the case of poor Ethel later on. They would leave her in no doubt as to their opinion of the imbecile she had got upon her hands. It would be a blessing if he were to take himself off for good. There was no longer any

chance of his ever being anything but just Tom Phipps, the painter. Even if he had stayed from the funeral, it would n't have greatly mended the matter. What did ten hundred dollars amount to, when it might have been as many thousands?

Getting his daughter alone for a moment, Mr. Spinney said to her :

" I guess you 've got about enough of Tom Phipps for the present. A little of him goes a good ways, I should say. Don't wonder you want a change."

" Tom is very kind to me," replied Ethel demurely, with a flitting spark in either eye. " Of course a husband is n't like a tender, considerate father always on the lookout to save his daughter's feelings from every sort of hurt."

Mr. Spinney drew a quick breath, and gave Ethel a flurried glance. The velvet paw had suddenly scratched him.

IV

THE next day Phipps began preparing for his departure. Late in the afternoon, as he was setting the shop to rights, Mr. Dunn drove up to the door and alighted.

"I hope nobody else is dead," was Thomas Phipps's swift reflection. He dusted off the seat of the only chair on the premises, and offered it to Mr. Dunn, who did not speak for full half a minute. Then he said:

"Mr. Phipps, in disregarding your late uncle's injunction you debarred yourself from receiving the legacy left to you conditionally in the seventh clause of his will."

"I understood that to be about the

size of it. I've been told so forty or fifty times since yesterday."

"Naturally. Your surprising procedure, if you will allow me so to characterize it, has resulted in rendering null and void that whole clause in the testament."

"No! I don't see how any act of mine could upset the bequests to the Fishleys. *They* did n't go to the funeral. Every one of 'em stuck to orders like a little man."

"They complied with the stipulations of the testament," said the lawyer, with a touch of asperity in his voice.

"That's what I'm saying. They sat right up and took their medicine."

"That's the point. It was through no fault of theirs that they got debarred."

"It was my fault, then? I suppose it's wicked in me, Mr. Dunn, but I'm glad if the Fishleys are n't going to get anything, whatever way the matter came about. They don't deserve the money, and don't especially need it."

"Fortunately, they do not need it."

"They'll put up a stiff fight all the same."

"I should not like to hold a brief for them. But this is a side issue of no interest."

"It's all as interesting as can be."

"You were not at the reading of the will last Monday afternoon, and are perhaps unaware that in the seventh clause mention was made of supplementary instructions, consigned to my charge, for the executors to act upon in the not probable contingency of one or more of the beneficiaries named

failing to respect the testator's wishes on a certain point."

"Yes, I heard about that."

"Well, Mr. Phipps, the astonishing step you took made the immediate examination of that paper imperative. It cancels the whole of section VII., and directs the executors to pay over the various sums therein specified to such person or persons (of the five legatees named) as should be present at the testator's funeral in spite of his prohibition—the aggregate sum to be divided share and share alike in case there should be two or more such persons. It is hardly necessary for me to say, Mr. Phipps, that the sum of thirteen thousand dollars falls to you."

The young man leaned back on the turpentine barrel, upon the head of

which he had seated himself, and broke into one of those peculiar laughs of his — a laugh that could be seen but not heard.

“I always thought there was a heap of concealed fun in Uncle Dan’el,” said Thomas Phipps. Then, with great seriousness: “I wish you’d break the news as gently as you can to father-in-law Spinney.”

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THE MAJOR'S STORY

IN "The Thousand and One Nights" the vizier's daughter, Shahrazád, told all the stories; but in our single séance the tales were told by five men, gathered round the hearthstone of a New England roadside tavern, in which they had sought shelter from a blizzard and were snow-bound for the night. The sleighing party thus circumstanced found themselves, after supper, in a comfortable sitting-room with a blazing fire of hemlock logs in front of them, and for lack of more original entertainment, fell to story-telling. Though

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each of the five narratives which then took shape in the firelight had its own proper *raison d'être*, I shall reproduce only one of them here. The narrative so specialized owes its consequence, such as it is, to the fact that the narrator — nearly a personal stranger to me — was obliged to leave it in a manner unfinished, and that I, by singular chance, was able to supply what might be called the sequel.

This story, which I have named "The White Feather," was related by a Massachusetts veteran of the Civil War, who had left one arm behind him on the field and in the record of his regiment a reputation for great bravery. The Major, as I subsequently learned, had received a military education at a period when the army held out but scant inducements,

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and had turned aside from it to study law. At the beginning of hostilities in '61, he offered his services to the Federal government, and was placed upon the staff of General —, with the rank of captain. The grade of major was afterward won in a Massachusetts regiment. Severely wounded at Spottsylvania Court House, and permanently disabled, he resigned his commission, and, after a long invalidism, took to the law again.

With the fullest claim to the later title of judge, he prefers to be thought of and addressed as the Major. To-day, his sinewy, erect figure and clear blue eyes, gentle and resolute by turns behind their abattis of gray eyebrow, give no hint of his threescore years and ten, especially when he is speaking.

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"Some men," began the Major, setting his half emptied tumbler a little farther back from the edge of the table, "some men have a way of impressing us at sight as persons of indomitable will, or dauntless courage, or sterling integrity—in short, as embodiments of this or that latent quality, although they may have given no evidence whatever of possessing the particular attribute in question. We unhesitatingly assume how they would act under certain imaginable circumstances and conditions. A gesture, a glance of the eye, a something in the intonation of the voice, hypnotizes us, and we at once accept as real what may be only a figment of our own creating. My story, if it's what you would call a story, deals incidentally with one of these curious prepossessions."

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The Major paused a moment, and beat a soft tattoo with two fingers on the arm of the chair, as if he were waiting for his thoughts to fall into line.

“At the outbreak of the war, Jefferson Kane was in his senior year at West Point. The smoke of that first gun fired in Charleston harbor had hardly blown away when he withdrew from the Academy — to cast his lot, it was surmised, with that of his native state, as many another Southron in like circumstances was doing; for Kane belonged to an old Southland family. On the contrary, he applied for service in the army of the North — in the then nebulous Army of the Potomac. Men of his training were sorely needed at the moment, and his application was immediately granted.

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“Kane was commissioned first lieutenant and provisionally assigned for duty in a camp of instruction somewhere in Massachusetts, at Readville, if I recollect. There he remained until the early part of '62, doing important work, for the recruits that passed through his hands came out finished soldiers, so far as drill was involved. Then Kane was ordered to the front, and there I fell in with him — a tall, slender young man, with gray eyes and black hair, which he wore rather long, unlike the rest of us, who went closely cropped, Zouave fashion. I ought to say here that though I saw a great deal of him at this time, I am now aware that the impression he produced upon me was somewhat vague. His taking sides with the North presumably gave mortal of-

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fense to his family; but he never talked of himself or of the life he had left behind him in the South. Without seeming to do so, he always avoided the topic.

“From the day Kane joined our regiment, which formed part of Stahl’s brigade, he was looked upon as a young fellow destined to distinguish himself above the common. It was no ordinary regiment into which he had drifted. Several of the companies comprising it were made up of the flower of New England youth — college seniors, professional men, men of wealth and social rating. But Kane was singled out from the throng, and stood a shining figure.

“I cannot quite define what it was that inspired this instant acceptance of him. Perhaps it was a blending of

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several things — his judicial coolness, his soldierly carriage, the quiet skill and tact with which he handled men drawn from peaceful pursuits and new to the constraints of discipline ; men who a brief space before were persons of consideration in their respective towns and villages, but were now become mere pawns on the great chessboard of war. At times they had to be handled gingerly, for even a pawn will turn. Kane's ready efficiency, and the modesty of it—the modesty that always hitches on to the higher gifts—naturally stimulated confidence in him. His magnetic Southern ways drew friends from right and left. Then he had the prestige of the West Pointer. But allowing for all this, it is not wholly clear what it was that made him, within the

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space of a month, the favorite of the entire regiment and the idol of Company A, his own company. That was the position he attained with apparently no effort on his part. Company A would have died for him, to a man. Among themselves, round the mess table, they did n't hide their opinion of Jeff Kane, or their views on the situation at large. The chief command would have been his, could the question have been put to vote. 'I would n't like to lose the kid out of the company,' observed Sergeant Berwick one day, 'but it would be a blessed good thing if he could change shoulder straps with the colonel.'"

Here the Major suddenly remembered the unfinished Bourbon and Apollinaris in his glass and interrupted himself.

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"The colonel alluded to by the sergeant was a colonel of politics, and ought to have stuck to his glue factory down East. In those days we had a good many generals and colonels, and things, with political pulls. I think there were more than a few of that kidney in our recent little scrimmage with Spain. I don't believe in putting protégés and hangers-on out of employment over the heads of men who have been trained to the profession of arms. Some fine day we'll be convinced of the expediency of stowing the politicians. We ought to have a National Cold Storage Warehouse on purpose. But that's another story, as our friend Kipling remarks — too frequently."

The Major flicked off a flake of cigar ash from the looped-up empty

sleeve that constantly gave him the oratorical air of having one hand thrust into his shirt-bosom, and went on with his narrative.

“We were as yet on only the outer edge of that lurid battle-summer which no man who lived through it, and still lives, can ever forget. Meanwhile vast preparations were making for another attempt upon Richmond. The inertia of camp-life with no enemy within reach tells on the nerves after a while. It appeared to be telling on young Kane’s. Like the regiment, which hitherto had done nothing but garrison duty in forts around Washington, he had seen no active service, and was ready for it. He was championing on the bits, as the boys said. His impatience impressed his comrades, in whose estimation he had long since

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become a hero — with all the heroism purely potential.

“For months the monotony of our existence had been enlivened only by occasional reconnaissances, with no result beyond a stray minié ball now and then from some outlying sharpshooter. So there was widespread enthusiasm, one night, when the report came in that a large Confederate force, supposed to be Fitzhugh Lee, was in movement somewhere on our left. In the second report, which immediately telescoped the first, this large force dwindled down to a small squad thrown forward — from an Alabama regiment, as we found out later — to establish an advanced picket line. A portion of Company A was selected to look into the move, and dislodge or capture the post. I got leave to

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accompany Lieutenant Kane and the thirty-five men detailed for duty.

“ We started from camp at about four o'clock of an ugly April morning, with just enough light in the sky to make a ghastly outline of everything, and a wind from the foothills that pricked like needles. Insignificant and scarcely noticed details, when they chance to precede some startling event, have an odd fashion of storing themselves away in one's memory. It all seems like something that happened yesterday, that tramp through a landscape that would have done credit to a nightmare — the smell of the earth thick with strange flowering shrubs ; the overleaning branches that dashed handfuls of wet into our faces ; the squirrel that barked at us from a persimmon-tree, and how private Duffy

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raised a laugh by singing out, 'Shut up, ye young rebel!' and brought down upon himself a curt reprimand from Kane; for we were then beyond our own lines, and silence was wholesome. The gayety gradually died out of us as we advanced into the *terra incognita* of the enemy, and we became a file of phantoms stealing through the gloaming.

"Owing to a stretch of swamp and a small stream that tried to head us off in a valley, it was close upon sunrise when we reached the point aimed at. The dawn was already getting in its purple work behind the mountain ranges; very soon the daylight would betray us—and we had planned to take the picket by surprise. For five or ten minutes the plan seemed a dead failure; but presently we saw that we

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had them. Our approach had evidently not been discovered. The advantages were still in our favor, in spite of the daybreak having overtaken us.

“A coil of wet-wood smoke rising above the treetops, where it was blown into threads by the wind, showed us our nearness to the enemy. Their exact position was ascertained by one of our scouts who crawled through the underbrush and got within a hundred feet of the unsuspecting bivouac.

“On the flattened crest of a little knoll, shut in by dwarf cedars and with a sharp declivity on the side opposite us, an infantry officer and twelve or fifteen men were preparing to breakfast. In front of a hut built of boughs and at some distance from the spot where the rifles were stacked, a



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group in half undress was sniffing the morning air. A sentinel, with his gun leaning against a stump, was drinking something out of a gourd as unconcernedly as thank you. Such lack of discipline and utter disregard of possible danger were common enough in both armies in the early days of the war. 'The idea of burning green wood on a war-path!' growled the scout. 'If them tenderfoots was in the Indian country their scalps would n't be on their empty heads a quarter of an hour.'

"We did n't waste a moment preparing to rush the little post. A whispered order was passed along not to fire before we sprang from cover, and then the word would be given. There was a deathly stillness, except that the birds began to set up a clatter, as

they always do at dawn. I remember one shrill little cuss that seemed for all the world to be trying to sound a note of alarm. We scarcely dared draw breath as we moved stealthily forward and up the incline. The attacking party, on the right, was led by Kane and comprised about two thirds of the detachment; the remainder was to be held in reserve under me. The row of cedars hung with creeper hid us until we were within forty or fifty yards of the encampment, and then the assaulting column charged.

“What happened then — I mean the dark and fatal thing that happened — I did n't witness; but twenty pairs of eyes witnessed it, and a score of tongues afterward bore testimony. I did not see Lieutenant Kane until the affair was over.

“Though the Confederates were taken wholly unawares, the first shot was fired by them, for just as our men came into the open the sentinel chanced to pick up his musket. A scattering volley followed from our side, and a dozen gray figures, seen for a moment scuttling here and there, seemed to melt into the smoke which had instantly blotted out nearly everything. When the air cleared a little, Kane’s men were standing around in disorder on the deserted plateau. A stack of arms lay sprawling on the ground and an iron kettle of soup or coffee, suspended from a wooden tripod, was simmering over the blaze of newly lighted fagots. How in the devil, I wondered, had the picket-guard managed to slip through their hands? What had gone wrong?

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"It was only on the return march that I was told, in broken words, what had taken place. Lieutenant Kane had botched the business—he had shown the white feather! The incredible story took only a few words in the telling.

"Kane had led the charge with seeming dash and valor, far in advance of the boys, but when the Confederate officer, who was pluckily covering the flight of the picket, suddenly wheeled and with sweeping sabre rushed toward Kane, the West Pointer broke his stride, faltered, and squarely fell back upon the line hurrying up the slope to his support. The action was so unexpected and amazing that the men came to a dead halt, as if they had been paralyzed in their tracks, and two priceless minutes were

lost. When the ranks recovered from their stupor, not a gray blouse was anywhere to be seen, save that of the sentry lying dead at the foot of the oak stump.

"That was the substance of the hurried account given me by Sergeant Berwick. It explained a thing which had puzzled me not a little. When I reached the plateau myself, immediately after the occurrence of the incident, Kane's men were standing there indecisive, each staring into his comrade's face in a dazed manner. Then their eyes had turned with one accord upon Lieutenant Kane. That combined glance was as swift, precise, and relentless as a volley from a platoon. Kane stood confronting them, erect, a trifle flushed, but perfectly cool, with the point of his sabre

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resting on the toe of one boot. He could n't have appeared cooler on a dress-parade. Something odd and dramatic in the whole situation set me wondering. The actors in the scene preserved their hesitating attitude for only twenty seconds or so, and then the living picture vanished in a flash, like a picture thrown from the kinetoscope, and was replaced by another. Kane stepped forward two paces, and as his sword cut a swift half circle in the air, the command rang out in the old resonant, bell-like tones, 'Fall in, men!' I shall never forget how he looked every inch the soldier at that moment. But they — they knew!

"There was no thought of pursuing the escaped picket with the chances of bringing up against an entire regiment, probably somewhere in the neighbor-

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hood. The men silently formed into line, a guard was detailed to protect the rear of the column, and we began our homeward march.

“That march back to Camp Blenker was a solemn business. Excepting for the fact that we were on the double-quick and the drum taps were lacking, it might have been a burial. Not a loud word was spoken in the ranks, but there was a deal of vigorous thinking. I noticed that Second Lieutenant Rollins and three or four others never took their eyes off of Jefferson Kane. If he had made a motion to get away, I rather fancy it would have gone hard with him.

“We got into camp on schedule time, and in less than fifteen minutes afterward Jefferson Kane’s name was burning on every lip. Marconi’s wire-

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less telegraph was anticipated that forenoon in Camp Blenker. On a hundred intersecting currents of air the story of the lieutenant's disgrace sped from tent to tent throughout the brigade.

"At first nobody would believe it—it was some sell the boys had put up. Then the truth began to gain ground; incredulous faces grew serious; it was a grim matter. The shadow of it gathered and hung over the whole encampment. A heavy gloom settled down upon the members of Company A, for the stigma was especially theirs. There were a few who would not admit that their lieutenant had been guilty of cowardice, and loyally held out to the end. While conceding the surface facts in the case, they contended that the lieu-

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tenant had had a sudden faint, or an attack of momentary delirium. Similar instances were recalled. They had happened time and again. Anybody who doubted the boy's pluck was an idiot. A braver fellow than Jeff Kane never buckled a sword-belt. That vertigo idea, however, did n't cut much ice, as you youngsters of to-day would phrase it. There were men who did not hesitate to accuse Lieutenant Kane of intending to betray the detachment into the hands of the Confederates. Possibly he did n't start out with that purpose, it might have occurred to him on the spot; the opportunity had suggested it; if there had been more than a picket-guard on hand he would have succeeded. But the dominant opinion was summed up by Corporal Simms :

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‘He just showed the white feather, and that’s all there is about it. He did n’t mean nothin’, he was just scared silly.’

“In the mean time Kane had shut himself in his tent on the slant of a hill, and was not seen again, excepting for half a moment when he flung back the flap and looked down upon the parade ground with its radiating white-walled streets. What report he had made of the expedition, if he had made any report, did not transpire. Within an hour after our return to camp a significant meeting of the captains of the regiment had been convened at headquarters. Of course a court-martial was inevitable. Though Lieutenant Kane had not as yet been placed under actual arrest, he was known to be under surveillance. At

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noon that day, just as the bugle was sounding, Jefferson Kane shot himself."

The Major made an abrupt gesture with his one hand, as if to brush away the shadow of the tragedy.

"That was over forty years ago," he continued, meditatively, "but the problem discussed then has been discussed at odd intervals ever since. In a sort of spectral way, the dispute has outlasted nine tenths of those who survived the war. Differences of opinion hang on like old pensioners or the rheumatism. Whenever four or five graybeards of our regiment get together, boring one another with 'Don't you remember,' the subject is pretty sure to crop up. Some regard Kane's suicide as a confession of guilt, others as corroborative proof of

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the mental derangement which first showed itself in his otherwise inexplicable default before a mere handful of the enemy — a West Pointer! So we have it, hot and heavy, over a man who nearly half a century ago ceased to be of any importance."

"What is your own diagnosis of the case, Major?" asked young Dr. Atwood, who always carried the shop about with him.

"Personally," returned the Major, "I acquit Kane of disloyalty, and I don't believe that he was exactly a coward. He had n't the temperament. I will confess that I'm a little mixed. Sometimes I imagine that that first glimpse of his own people somehow rattled him for an instant, and the thing was done. But whether that man was a coward or a traitor, or

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neither, is a question which has never definitely been settled."

"Major," I said, hesitating a little, "I think I can, in a way, settle it—or, at least, throw some light upon it."

"You?"—and the Major, with a half amused air, looked up at me from under his shaggy, overhanging eyebrows. "Why, you were not born when all this happened."

"No, I was not born then. My knowledge in the matter is something very recent. While wintering in the South, two or three years ago, I became acquainted, rather intimately acquainted, with the family of Jefferson Kane—that is, with his brother and sister."

"So?"

"It was not until after the surrender of Lee that Jefferson's death was

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known as a certainty to his family — the manner of it is probably not known to them to this hour. Indeed, I am positive of it. They have always supposed that he died on the field or in the hospital.”

“The records at the War Department could have enlightened them,” said the Major.

“They did not care to inquire. He had passed out of their lives; his defection never was forgiven. The Confederate officer before whose sword Lieutenant Kane recoiled that day was his father.”

“So!”

“Captain Peyton Kane was a broken man after that meeting. He never spoke of it to a living soul, save one — his wife, and to her but once. Captain Kane was killed in the second day’s battle at Gettysburg.”

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My words were followed by a long silence. The room was so still that we could hear the soft pelting of the snow against the window-panes.

Then the old Major slowly rose from the chair and took up the empty glass beside him, not noticing that it was empty until he had lifted it part way to his lips. "Boys," he said, very gently, "only blank cartridges are fired over soldiers' graves. Here's to their memory — the father and the son!"

Other stories, mirthful and serious, were told later on; but the Major did not speak again. He sat there in the dying glow of the firelight, inattentive, seemingly remote in an atmosphere of his own, brooding, doubtless, on

"Old, unhappy, far-off things,
And battles long ago."

